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# A MODERN THEISM

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MINOT SIMONS

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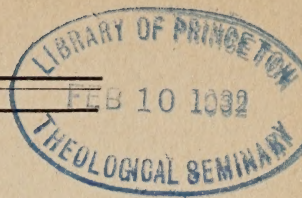
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A MODERN THEISM





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# *A Modern Theism*

✓ by

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All Souls, Unitarian,  
New York City*



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## TO THE READER

THE following chapters are made up for the most part from sermons delivered in the Church of All Souls, Unitarian, New York City. For the purposes of this book the material has been reassembled and amplified with other sermon material previously published and now made to do service again in a new setting. The sermonic values are retained so far as possible. Material from the first two chapters has appeared in *The Christian Register*.

The theism of these chapters is a dynamic theism. A mechanical term is used in order to imply "Effective Action" for the creating of positive spiritual attitudes. As a preacher, the author has endeavored to bring to a congregation the elements of a modern theistic philosophy in terms the layman can use to create his own religious philosophy with which to face the religious problems which today beset him theoretically and practically.

Insight into the great mysteries of our spiritual life lies chiefly along the way of a triumphant idealism, but a new vision is now coming from the cosmology which modern science is doing so much to create. The conclusions of the

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new physics have been received with astonishing interest by the popular mind throughout the world and especially by youth. Einstein, Edington, Jeans and Millikan have become international heroes. People seem to feel that at last they have something real upon which to base abstract thought. However abstract the base itself appears ultimately to be, it seems nevertheless to offer a more realistic approach to an understanding of the Reality in which the human spirit has its being.

A modern theism might well start, therefore, with the inspirations of such a realistic approach. Naturally these chapters do not pretend to be an exhaustive presentation of modern theism. Each one is designed to carry a definite message concerning some of the more baffling mysteries of human experience. Modern religious humanism is today offering a powerful challenge to traditional theism, and an effort is made in these chapters to recognize the value of this movement, but at the same time to inspire a positive rather than a negative attitude toward the ultimate mysteries. The author feels profoundly that the individual life has moral and spiritual significance to the universe and that the spirit of man has a cosmic destiny. Many difficulties which we cannot comprehend we can surmount.

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# I

## A REALISTIC APPROACH TO A MODERN THEISM

### I

“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?  
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:  
If I make my bed in the grave, behold, thou art there.  
If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;  
Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
And thy right hand shall hold me.  
If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;  
Even the night shall be light about me.  
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;  
But the night shineth as the day:  
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

Are these mere words, mere empty rhetoric?  
Are these exalted figures of speech really meaningless? I am using their exalted symbolism as a poetic introduction to a modern Theism, but I realize that there are many high-minded persons who cannot use them with the thought that they refer to any Reality. I realize, too, that the time has gone by for any assumption of lofty irony on the part of those who can use them

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toward those who cannot. There are too many opportunities for misunderstanding both of words and of ideas. It is a time rather for sympathetic attitudes of mind, and for earnest endeavors on the part of Theists to state the positive grounds for a rational Theism. It is time to state these grounds as convincingly and as persuasively as possible. To lose all thought that there is a Spiritual Reality in and through the universe, even with all the intellectual difficulties involved in the thought, is a tragic and unnecessary loss from the point of view of a modern Theist.

It is nothing new for the human mind to have difficulty with the conception of God. In our day, however, there are new difficulties which cannot be escaped. Thoughtful persons realize that they can no longer take refuge in an obstinate retention of traditional conceptions without some rational justification for such conceptions. The difficulties are real. They are involved in the modern ideas of the universe, and such ideas are new. Thoughts of God must be adjusted to them because they themselves cannot be adjusted to traditional conceptions of God.

An unwarranted assumption must be referred to at once. It is to the effect that "religion coming of age" means the natural outgrowth of any belief in God. A modern Theist will give battle to that assumption. The natural outgrowth of

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traditional conceptions of God is one thing, and the outgrowth of any conception of God is another. Religion coming of age means rather a natural growth from lesser into larger conceptions of God, impressive and comforting beyond all previous visions of the human mind. Such a growth has only begun. Many years of intense philosophic meditation will be required to attain a just estimate of the evidence now presented to us and which must be adequately interpreted, not only by the utmost reach of logical penetration but by the utmost power of penetrating imagination. At the moment the important thing to realize is that the advocates of naturalism are not saying the last word, but are rather challenging us to show wherein they are not convincing.

### II

The modern Theist stands as squarely before Reality as any truth-seeker who makes his own interpretation of experience. Two lines of interpretation are illuminating; one of nature and the other of human nature.

In his interpretation of his human experience with nature, a modern Theist is guided by scientific reports of facts. The modern interest in the revelations of science has led to a complete restatement of the philosophy of religion and

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has suggested what might be called a realistic approach to a modern Theism. Multitudes of men and women today have come under the influence of the scientific habit of mind. They are no longer willing merely to accept. They desire to know why and what and how. They are subjecting all doctrines and all traditional authorities to a frank scrutiny. Authorities must make good or they are discarded. There is a growing passion for reality in the modern world. It is bringing to pass a new outlook upon the world and a profound desire to discover the truth about it. Ideas are no longer sacred because they are old, but only because they are true.

Day by day we confront both the uncertainties of life and the all-surrounding Mystery. There are many days when we cannot give much thought to these matters; days when we are occupied with the things that we can see and handle, the substantial things at hand, the familiar forces of nature which we have harnessed. There come times, however, when Mystery besets us and we must look at it with a clear eye and a clear mind, and at such a time we are today immensely helped and inspired by the recent testimony of science itself.

Very impressive is the extraordinary popular interest in the works of Professor Albert Einstein, the greatest intellectual genius of the mod-

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ern world, and of Sir Arthur Eddington, of Sir James Jeans, and of Dr. Robert A. Millikan, astronomers, physicists, and mathematicians of the highest rank. The popular mind seems to sense the fact that such men are today the leading exponents of the tendencies of scientific conclusions, and the popular interest in their testimony is quite as much a religious as a scientific interest.

The widespread concern with the work of Einstein is particularly noteworthy because his testimony is really understood only by a very few of the great mathematical minds of the modern world, yet he is regarded as the creator of a new conception of the universe and even if his cosmology is not comprehended by the great mass of people, his words are impressive because he speaks as a religious man as well as a scientific man. Fortunately, Eddington and Jeans have been able to put their conclusions into popular form and by them we are easily led unthinkable distances into the stellar spaces, and again unthinkable distances into the atomic spaces. In one adventure we seem to be of inconceivable insignificance; in the other we seem to be of colossal importance. It is quite likely that in these experiences we are appalled both by the marvelous ingenuity of the human mind and by the incredible and baffling ingenuity of the Creator whose ultimate truth is still so com-

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pletely hidden in the Mystery of the Unknowable.

To be appalled is a familiar human experience. Ever since man became "anthropos," the upward looker, he has been appalled by the mystery of his world and by the uncertainties of his life. To his utmost power he has tried to adjust himself with some degree of confidence to the mystery. But whereas he was once terrified by the mystery, he is now challenged by it. Back of that challenge lies a long process of intellectual development, a process in which an unruly imagination has been subjected to cultivation and to the guidance of reason. In that process the old fear that mystery held something frightful, malignant and intentionally hostile has gone. It is hard to appreciate the relief of that change of view. Mystery still confronts the human mind, a mystery more majestic than ever, but it is not a mystery of which to be afraid. The Unknown can be known up to man's powers of discovery and of comprehension, and as knowledge increases, it is always a further insight into a universe of order. Mystery is of the truth, and man's passion for the truth knows no bounds.

The passion for the truth, however, as expressed in modern science, has threatened man's spiritual life with a loss of all meaning. Such a loss has seemed to be involved in the complete

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domination of a mechanical universe in which spiritual values are doomed. A good many modern philosophers have felt confident of being able to repel the threat, yet the mechanical aspect of things has been well-nigh overwhelming. Hence, the fascinating and vital importance of the new physics. A mechanical universe turns out to be an unsatisfactory interpretation of the meaning of Reality. To follow the testimony to that end is an impressive experience both with the extraordinary mathematical powers of the human mind and with the sublime mathematical constitution of the nature of things.

Both Eddington and Jeans tell us that in approaching fundamental and ultimate Reality, science can best interpret what it finds in terms of mathematical symbols, that is, in terms of thought. This sounds like the old-fashioned idealism of the Berkeley School, but in the case of science the conclusion is arrived at by a scientific process of reasoning and is expressed in scientific terms. The conclusion is of no special comfort to the various idealisms of the so-called New Thought, because the substantiality of matter is not in the least interfered with. The substantiality of the world of experience is practically the same, but its ultimate nature is not that of mechanics but of thought. Atheism is no longer supported by science. Man's spiritual life

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is not to be swallowed up and overwhelmed in futility by a machine universe. In other words, the meaning of the vast new knowledge about the constitution of the atom and of the universe is most successfully approached by the mathematical way and interpreted in mathematical concepts.

Jeans has made a very important declaration in his book, *The Mysterious Universe*, to the effect "that the river of knowledge has made a sharp bend in the last few years. Thirty years ago we thought, or assumed, that we were heading toward an ultimate reality of a mechanical kind. It seemed to consist of a fortuitous jumble of atoms, which was destined to perform meaningless dances for a time under the action of blind purposeless forces, and then fall back to form a dead world. Into this wholly mechanical world, through the play of the same blind forces, life had stumbled by accident. One tiny corner at least, and possibly several tiny corners, of this universe of atoms had chanced to become conscious for a time, but was destined in the end, still under the action of blind mechanical forces, to be frozen out and again leave a lifeless world.

"Today there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no

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longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter—not of course our individual minds, but the mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown exist as thoughts.”<sup>1</sup>

Jeans declares that: “It would now seem to be beyond dispute that in some way nature is more closely allied to the concepts of pure mathematics than to those of biology or of engineering, and even if the mathematical interpretation is only a third man-made mould, it at least fits nature incomparably better than the two previously tried.”<sup>2</sup> For the interpretation of the ultimate nature of things he intimates that we can hardly use either the word “ideal” or “real,” but rather the word “mathematical.” “The universe can be best pictured, although still very imperfectly and inadequately, as consisting of pure thought, the thought of what, for want of a wider word, we must describe as a mathematical thinker.”<sup>3</sup> “Nature seems very conversant with the rules of pure mathematics, as our mathematicians have formulated them in their studies, out of their own inner consciousness and without drawing to any appreciable extent on the experience of the outer world.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 157, Macmillan Co.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

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"Thus while it must be fully admitted that the mathematical explanation may prove neither to be final nor the simplest possible, we can unhesitatingly say that it is the simplest and most complete so far found, so that, relative to our present knowledge, it has the greatest chance of being the explanation which lies nearest to the truth."<sup>5</sup>

"If anything is destined to replace mathematics, there would seem to be specially long odds against it being mechanics."<sup>6</sup>

These quotations indicate the nature of the new testimony. Modern man must get used to a new universe, and it will take time. The thought patterns in our minds belong for the most part to the pre-Einstein age. We recall that in that former age we heard references to a possible world of four dimensions. All of our experiences which we had had or which we could imagine, belonged to a world of three dimensions, length, breadth, and height. What could be a world of four dimensions? We could not imagine. Einstein tells us that we have been living in a world of four dimensions all the time and did not know it. The fourth dimension is Time. Time and space are merged into a world of four dimensions, a strange world in which both space and time are finite. As Jeans de-

<sup>5</sup> Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 156, Macmillan Co.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

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scribes them, they "are so completely welded together, so perfectly merged into one, that the laws of nature make no distinction between them, just as, on the cricket-field, length and breadth are so perfectly merged into one that the flying cricket-ball makes no distinction between them, treating the field merely as an area in which length and breadth separately have lost all meaning." <sup>7</sup> It is a strange world in which the familiar law of causation gives way to a law of probabilities, and in which the old laws of conservation of matter and of energy have disappeared into a new statement.

Into this strange world of ideas, few of us can enter with any understanding, yet those who can enter, tell us that the best working hypothesis of science at the moment is the hypothesis of a Thinker thinking the structure of things. We can be immensely encouraged by this testimony although an idealistic philosophy has given us this assurance for some years. To that philosophy however has come a new ally from the world of science. Mathematics is one of the supreme triumphs of the human mind. In it we have human intelligence in one of its sublimest activities, in one of the noblest of the sciences and one of the noblest of the arts, finding universal confirmation for its principles which have been worked out on our speck of a planet. When

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

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I follow at a great distance these mathematical minds and when there is revealed to me such astounding mathematical order in the nature of things, from the stars millions of light-years away to the atoms in my own bodily structure, I am forced to this conclusion; Reality which is thus universally intelligible, is the manifestation of Intelligence. To put it informally on the plane where we human beings live from day to day, the interpretation is this: whatever is intelligible is the manifestation of intelligence. There is no reason to doubt the same conclusion when made with regard to the universe. As Gerald Wendt says in his comment on the work of Jeans, "not since the days of Pythagoras twenty-five centuries ago has the music of the spheres sounded with such harmony." <sup>8</sup>

Mathematics sets the stage for all intellectual advances toward the truth of Reality. Eddington points out that each branch of experimental knowledge tends to have associated with it a specialized body of mathematical investigation. What are we to conclude from the fact that the behavior of Reality is intelligible to the mathematician and that the principles of the mathematician are necessary to all experimental science? What is suggested by the fact that the exact thought of the mathematician is corroborated in the very structure of the universe? A

<sup>8</sup> *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, Nov. 16, 1930, p. 4.

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few years ago Professor S. I. Bailey of Harvard University concluded a radio lecture on astronomy with this sentence: "Man may be only the latest development of the whirling star-mist, but the fact that he has intelligence enough to trace his evolution, stands unexplained except by the presence in nature of an Intelligence far superior to his own."

Naturalistic philosophers have not yet satisfactorily controverted the statement that "human intelligence stands unexplained except from the presence in nature of an Intelligence far superior to *its* own." A modern Theist considers the statement of first importance. Of course, the Universe Intelligence must be far superior to our own, but it is still intelligence. To be far superior does not make it any less intelligence, nor should it be ignored as though it were. It seems rather grotesque for a human mind, manifesting a capacity for mathematical insight and precision, to ignore the significance of that manifestation of intelligence in which he not only discovers his principles, but discovers them to be universally authenticated. Moreover, to be "far superior" does not take Intelligence out of touch with our intelligence, nor does it imply that it is any less akin to ours nor ours akin to it. Always and universally, as far as human intelligence penetrates into Reality, it is met with intelligibility. The Universe is a cosmos, a

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mathematical order and harmony. And this is a spiritual fact.

Moreover, we may further infer that the Intelligence universally expressing itself intelligibly, must be *there*, from the farthest suns to the atoms of our brain cells, universally there, universally present, administering the intelligible order, the Cosmic Intelligence administering the cosmos in order and harmony. There seems to be no possible way to comprehend the nature of this administration. As the way by which the human mind directs the muscles of the human body is a mystery, how much more of a mystery must be the direction of the physical universe by the Cosmic Mind! We can but draw our inferences and realize that a direct relationship of some kind must exist in both cases.

The cosmic order cannot be conceived as keeping itself, as self-existent, unless we think of the self as the Administrator, universally immanent, universally administering. As yet we have few symbols for this idea. Perhaps the one with which we can most easily begin is the idea of gravitation. The idea is entirely familiar though its comprehension is still beyond us. We have all had experience with it. We know it as a force universally immanent. We know that no physical object has been successfully screened from it. Moreover, we know that it is itself

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mathematically intelligible throughout the universe, including our own bodily structure. And so the immanence of gravitation becomes a symbol for the immanence of the Cosmic Intelligence. Gravitation acts universally, according to law. All energy throughout Reality acts according to law. Law is the name we give to the way the Administrator acts. The Cosmic Intelligence is administering the energy of every molecule and of every atom of the human brain, and every constituent of the atoms of the brain, electrons and protons, administering them with orderliness and purposefulness so that we ourselves can have capacity for intelligence. Such a symbolism seems to make our sense of the Intimate Presence, immanent as gravitation is immanent, more definitely and unescapably real.

### III

We now come to the second line of interpretation. The Cosmic Intelligence is expressing itself not only in nature, but in human nature. Man is not one thing and Reality another. Man is himself as much an expression of Reality as are the earth and the moon, the atoms and the molecules. I remember hearing Professor G. B. Foster put the idea in this way: "Since man is an integral part of the cosmos, his ideal-achieving capacity is in some degree, if not actually so, an activity, an expression of existence as a

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whole." To a modern Theist the evidential value of the moral and spiritual nature of man, of his "ideal-achieving capacity," is supreme.

In much of the present day philosophy, particularly in the various expressions of naturalistic philosophy, I find a complete lack of adequate appraisal of the significance of human nature. This surprises me because I should think it would be just the other way. Such a just appraisal requires the most profound reflection upon the sublimity of the intellectual and moral capacities of our inner life. The utmost stretch of the imagination is necessary even to begin to appreciate them and their revealing significance. It seems a ghastly perversion of an intelligent judgment to toss them off and to toss them aside as a mere event in nature. The mechanistic philosophers, however, have been guilty of just such a perversion. They have been impressed by nothing in humanity beyond physico-chemical processes. They have not reflected upon all the facts. That must be why the treatment of personality by Behaviorists, for example, seems pitiful in the extreme.

The modern Theist is interested in something more than the physico-chemical processes. There is evidence of something more, the inner being of man, which is not to be interpreted as a mere biological mutation. The "something more" appears on a different plane of Reality

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from all physical processes, a plane of worth, of quality, of value, a something more which is supremely revealing. It is of the utmost importance to appraise the significance of this "something more."

Here in the inner life are capacities of transcendent worth, capacities not only of intellectual but of spiritual discernment, insight, understanding; capacities of moral will and purpose, of idealism, of courage, loyalty and heroism; of faith and hope, of self-sacrifice for another and of self-sacrifice for an ideal. Here they are in humanity, capacities sublime beyond all other manifestations of Reality. Here they are, not only in the noble characters of history but in the persons we know, marvelous persons, moving us to reverence, and even to tears of admiration and sympathy. Here they are, indeed, in our own awe-inspiring thoughts, feelings and aspirations. Here they are, supremely revealing facts in Reality and of Reality. And again, we may justly infer that "their presence in human nature is unexplained except for the presence in nature" of a Spirituality, "far superior to our own." Of course, it must be far superior, but still spirituality. To be far superior, does not make it any less spirituality, nor remote from our own, nor less akin to ours nor ours to it. Moreover, to whatever heights the human spirit can attain, it feels that

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the Cosmic Spirit is *there*, immanent, confirming the inner urge of the human spirit toward Perfection.

With inner capacities to seek truth and to attain goodness, there is an inner urge to perceive and to create beauty; it is another sublime ideal-achieving capacity. Beauty is a native aspiration of the human spirit. And this craving is likewise confirmed in the universal nature of things. Rhythm is universal, from the motions of nebulæ to the motions of atoms. Cosmically it is vast beyond all comprehension. In our world, however, we note it in all aspects of nature. The ugly is like a dissonance in music leading back again to beauty. Man rejoices in the innumerable beauties of the world. He rejoices in the spiritual beauty of his own creations. All the arts are special expressions of universal rhythm. Beethoven and Mozart, Shakespeare and Wordsworth, Leonardo and Raphael, are master minds of beauty, with extraordinary capacities of imagination whereby they become human interpreters of cosmic harmonies! These harmonies are something more than mechanical order and exactitude. They are beauty as well as truth.

### IV

These two interpretations of our experience with nature and with human nature are but in-

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timations of a realistic approach to a modern Theism. Man's ideal-achieving capacity is a capacity with which the universe has endowed him. To say merely that it has emerged from the universe is not to say enough. It has been no accident. It has been intended.

John Fiske quotes the following anecdote of Kepler: "Yesterday, when weary with writing, and my mind quite dusty with considering these atoms, I was called to supper, and a salad I had asked for was set before me. 'It seems, then,' said I aloud, 'that if pewter dishes, leaves of lettuce, grains of salt, drops of vinegar and oil, and slices of eggs, had been floating about in the air from all eternity, it might at last happen by chance that there would come a salad.' 'Yes,' says my wife, 'but not so nice and well-dressed as this of mine is!'"<sup>9</sup>

Such a salad! Such a world! Such a universe! Accident and chance may have their places in the vast scheme of things, but Great Nature's capacity to organize mathematically according to patterns and morally according to ideals, is not an accident.

Again I recall from Professor Foster: "The structure and function of the universe are such as to render the production of our human kind of values possible." For the production of our human kind of values, Reality must embody an

<sup>9</sup> Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, p. 195, Houghton Mifflin Co.

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adequate cause and that adequate cause must be Spirit. Mechanistic philosophy has never convincingly counteracted that statement; neither has evolutionary naturalism which recognizes spirituality as a real element in human nature, but without any corresponding reality in the nature of things. From this point of view human spirituality appears for a brief time, but nothing spiritual leads up to it, and nothing spiritual remains after the human experience is over. It is but a temporary budding and flowering of the cosmic mechanism, if one can tolerate such a figure of speech. If the moral and spiritual nature of man is but for a moment, if it has no revealing significance as to its source, then its own significance sinks to an absolute zero.

My complaint against all such points of view is that they display an arrested imagination. Their conclusions come to earth just when they should take wings. Exalted appreciation and insight should bear their witness to the sublimest truths. Experience enforces upon us a certain estimate of values. Spiritual processes appear to be "higher" than mere physical processes, and it will, therefore, seem irrational to explain the higher by the lower. If you stand before a great dynamo, you cannot conceive how such a machine, an embodiment of mechanical power, might give birth to a human mind. You can,

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however, appreciate the possibility of a human mind or minds having invented such a machine.

No play on words nor imposing array of words can conceal the fact that all forms of naturalism ignore the evidential value of the moral and spiritual nature of man as to the potentialities of Reality. Professor Harry Overstreet has written, "Emergent evolution seems to indicate that the emerging stages of reality successively reveal more of what reality has in it to be. Thus the organic reveals nature at a more realized level than the inorganic. The latest emergent is mind. Mind is, as it were, nature become conscious and articulate.

"It would seem folly, then, to continue to go solely to the least adequate level—to atoms and molecules—for information about what the universe is and has in it to be. It would seem equal folly to stop with the biological level. If mind is nature in its richest emergence, then mind is, thus far, nature's most adequate revealer.

"Man need no longer turn to himself despairingly *away* from a universe too baffling for him to explore. On the contrary, as nature's latest emergent, he may now turn to himself as to a glass *through which* he may see nature—darkly indeed, but far more clearly than on any other level of reality." <sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Survey*, January, 1931, p. 408.

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The question is often raised, "Why not infer an immoral principle in the universe as logically as a moral principle if inferences are to be drawn from the testimony of human nature." Why not a devil as well as a God! Indeed, why not a devil instead of a God! Because from the point of view of evolution, man's moral discipline indicates that evil is surmounted as concrete evils are gradually left behind by a developing moral intelligence and will. This point will later be considered at greater length. Suffice it to say here that the intention of the Cosmos seems to be that the destiny of the human race shall be an evolving moral competence. Why moral beings must have the capacity for both good and evil we do not know. It is easy to see that they must, if the human spirit is to have any moral significance, but it is not easy to reconcile the "must" to its fearful cost. Such reconciliation must lie within the Cosmos itself; but from the character of the laws of spiritual being and from the testimony of human evolution, it is more logical to infer that in the Cosmos there is a dominating moral principle.

### v

From what Reality is saying to him, both from the outside and from the inside, a modern Theist is convinced that the universe is not lifeless, not

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a mere Impersonal Force (which, by the way, is quite as impossible to comprehend as Mind) but that it is expressing Intelligence and in humanity a Moral Intelligence. From these two conclusions, so confirmed by evidence as to be practical certainties, he can go on to other conclusions which are natural inferences and which give reason for courage and faith.

For instance, a Cosmic Intelligence implies Cosmic Consciousness, again so "far superior to our own" as to be beyond our power of comprehension, yet not beyond our power of approach. How can we escape that implication? If a display of human intelligence implies a human consciousness, why not say that a display of Cosmic Intelligence implies a display of Cosmic Consciousness? If the cosmic process is intelligible, how is one justified in saying that it comes into consciousness in man alone? The intelligibility of the whole universe implies such a Cosmic Consciousness, and from its expression in the moral nature of man, we infer that it is a Cosmic Moral Intelligence. At least, in part, we can interpret it in terms of our own consciousness. It represents Intelligence and Intention, and we can at least approach it through our own understanding, feebly but truly.

But to what have we now come? We have come to elements of personality; intelligence, moral will, consciousness, the chief elements, in-

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deed, of our human personality. We have come, not to a Larger Man with form and outline but to a Spiritual Presence that is universal, not to "a Person" but to Personality, to the immanent, universal spiritual energies of intelligence, will and consciousness. We have come to Cosmic Personality, infinitely superior to our own and yet not to be ignored as less simply because it is beyond our comprehension; not to be ignored as remote, because we really sense it as unthinkably near in the administration of our own inner being. And how shall we interpret it? Not by ignoring it because "far superior to our own" but by reaching upward toward it through the utmost stretch of the imagination. The imagination can alone be the medium for our human approach to the highest truth. To infer Cosmic Personality, we must imagine the utmost of moral excellence and of spiritual perfectness, the highest that we can think, the farthest limits we can vision of lovingness, truth, perfection. We cannot overthink it. If we must reach our interpretation by the loftiest stretch of our imagination, then the words which express our noblest, tenderest personal feelings will not be misplaced. They will err in being deficient and in not being extravagant. We shall realize that fact more and more as we get used to our cosmic relation on the one hand, and on the other to the close intimate nearness and sympathetic un-

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derstanding of the Intimate Presence. If the spirituality and moral excellence of the Presence is far superior to our own, infinitely superior, then all the more are we justified in consecrating ourselves to its truth and purpose, and in feeling the companionship of its complete sympathy and understanding.

Of course, we have to think in terms of our own experience, but that experience will be true so far as it goes. We should not discredit our experience because it does not go far. And above all we must not assume to impose our own intellectual and moral limitations upon Infinite Spirituality. We should not regard it as but vaguely, uncertainly, partly moral, but rather as wholly, infinitely moral, visioned as actual from the point of view of our highest idealism. Such idealism is a true basis from which the imagination can take its flight. That is exactly what the scientific imagination does, taking flight from experience as far as experience goes, and the scientific imagination does wonders. That is what our spiritual imagination must do, and under the guidance of a free mind, it will likewise do wonders.

Some of the inferences will take a long time to work out because they represent a larger, more significant interpretation of Theism than that of old. Only in recent years have the vastness and complexity of the cosmic relation come

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home to the human race. It will take a long time to get used to them and to feel at home with them. It will take a long time for a frank realistic approach to apprehend their spiritual significance. Moreover, vast mysteries in human experience remain. The universal reign of law and order reduces the range if not the glory of our moral freedom and responsibility. Our attitude toward all such mysteries today, however, is a frank estimate of probabilities. If we see reason for faith and hope, we can confront with confidence what we cannot comprehend.

## II

### A MODERN THEISM WITHOUT REVELATION

#### I

IT IS not easy to venture into the field of metaphysics and yet it is an inspiring thing to do in spite of all the difficulties and confusions of thought. There seem to be certain simple principles which we can make familiar to ourselves, principles which suggest far more than we can comprehend, but which give us confidence. Though we see through a glass darkly, these principles help us to see through, to know in part, and to take positive moral and spiritual attitudes. To think on these things, helps us to get above the distractions of life into that realm of the spirit which ultimately has more meaning for us than the realm of things, and from which we can return to the realm of things better able to see our way.

The modern world is beset with Atheism. It will turn out, however, to have more vociferation than votes. Atheism is not new in the world. Psalmists of old declared, "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Throughout the

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past the Atheist has been considered a fool, a menace to the human race and a menace to the designs of God for the redemption of the race. Yet Atheism has been and is today the honest judgment of many high-minded men and women who have felt driven to this conclusion by what they have considered to be the evidence. In the past human sufferings have often driven people into Atheism and they do today, but intellectual difficulties with the thought of God are now forcing many people into a non-Theistic, if not an Atheistic attitude.

From his adventure into the field of metaphysics, the modern Theist returns with some light and leading. He is a Theist, not on the authority of some revelation but on the authority of the evidence. Emerson said somewhere, "There is a faith which makes Atheism absurd." That is a strong expression and I would not care to use it except possibly in connection with the eccentric utterances of some particular Atheist. I would rather say that there is now an interpretation of all the evidence in nature and in human nature which makes Atheism completely inadequate, and robs it of any lasting significance in human thought.

The modern Theist is a truth-seeker, drawing inferences from his interpretation of Reality which he holds, not as final statements of truth, but as postulates in pursuing truth. Such in-

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ferences are not "wish-thoughts" but necessary assumptions. We have already seen reason to infer the universal immanence of a Cosmic Intelligence, and in man the immanence of a Cosmic Moral Intelligence. At this point we may justly carry our inferences further.

### II

A modern Theist has a religion without a supernatural revelation. He confronts Reality as any truth-seeker, and aims to find out what it actually says for itself. He recognizes the authority of no supernaturally revealed truth.

Such an attitude toward revelation has become epoch-making in the philosophy of religion and in the religious life. What we think of revelation really determines our attitude toward truth and toward what we think to be the authority for truth. It determines the foundations of our religion and the character of our religious beliefs. It determines our attitude toward our own destiny, toward our relationships with our fellowmen and toward our whole outlook upon the world.

It is easy to see, then, that what we think of revelation is of supreme importance. If we think that it was completely and finally made once upon a time, we shall then go to that revelation and try and make out what it says. This is what

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the Christian world has done. It is what the Fundamentalist is still doing; he is going to the revelation that he finds in his Bible. He believes that the Bible is the one infallible revelation which contains all that man needs to know for his salvation.

To a modern Theist, revelation, if he uses the word at all, is a natural and universal process. He knows of no supernatural revelation in Bible, Pope, or Church. The prophets were not supernaturally-inspired men who became fortune-tellers and fore-tellers. Richard Hooker, the famous Church of England theologian in Elizabeth's time, is said to have declared that, "the Bible writers neither wrote nor spoke any words of their own, but uttered syllable by syllable as the Holy Spirit put it into their mouths." A modern Theist, on the contrary, considers the prophets to have been wise human beings with more than average intelligence and insight into political probabilities and into spiritual truths. They did not possess second sight, but they did possess sound judgment. There were many who pretended to be prophets, who were not wise, who proclaimed simply the comfortable things which the people wanted to hear, and these prophets have faded from the picture. What we have in the Bible is the record of a religious experience covering more than a thousand years on the part of a people sensitive to spiritual truth. The Bible

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is the progressive record of their discoveries. Above all there is the testimony of the Man of Nazareth, not a supernatural revealer of God but a natural discoverer of God, a proclaimer of the humaneness of God and the divineness of man, interpreting supremely the supreme things of the spirit. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time—but I say unto you . . ."

All truth has had to be discovered. I have intimated that that has apparently been the Cosmic Intention. Truth discovered becomes our own, a part of us. Truth revealed would be doubtfully ours. The only sense in which I could use the word revelation would be to refer it to the cosmic side of a human discovery. It is the truth to be discovered, or ideally to be worked out and understood by the human mind.

Marvelous is the power of the human mind. Its intended function is to discover truth. It has power to reason, to observe, to draw conclusions. When left to itself, it comes naturally to reasonable conclusions, but it has not been left to itself; it has enslaved itself. In the modern world, however, it has been freeing itself. It has begun to break its bonds and to follow its native impulses, as Paul proclaimed in classic words, "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good."

Once free from the bonds of traditional ideas of revelation, the human mind has reasoned it-

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self into the conception of a universe. It has looked out upon the all-surrounding Reality and has assumed the task of discovering its truth. In and through the seen it has perceived the not-seen, in and through the visible universe it has discovered the invisible Cosmic Universal. The universe reveals power, and in our human nature it reveals moral power. In one of my notebooks is this quotation from James Martineau: "The rule of right, the symmetries of character are no provincialisms of this planet. They are known among the stars, they reign beyond Orion and the Southern Cross and no subject mind, though it fly on one track forever, can escape beyond their bounds."

The Cosmic Administrator inevitably reveals himself in his works. You and I reveal ourselves in our works. Anything that a man makes is to a certain extent a self-expression. We listen to a symphony and it tells us of the composer that wrote it. We look at a piece of machinery and it tells us something about the man who invented it, and the man who made it. We read a book and it tells us in a measure of the man who wrote it. And so with the Cosmic Creator. He could not create without revealing something to another inquiring mind. He must express himself in Great Nature and in human nature because both are his creations. May we not fairly

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say that that was what he meant to do when he created an inquiring mind?

The inquiring mind has found out something of the methods of this cosmic self-expression. In all the infinite play of forces on earth, in sea and sky, in all the countless variety of life forms which have appeared, this self-expression has been made, and the discovery of the Creator has been going on.

It was surely a supreme moment when human nature appeared, naturally and beautifully rising from lower forms. Then appeared a being with reason and consciousness, not only a being in whose nature a new disclosure of creative power was made, but an inquiring mind which hereafter would make its own discoveries of that Creative Power. It was as though the process of evolution turned on itself and perceived itself. It was as though before that moment creation was simply a self-expression; and then in man, the revelation was perceived.

Revelation is a natural process of the unfolding of cosmic truth as the human mind grows in understanding. Nothing could be revealed to a human mind which could not understand it. As the world grows in knowledge, the revelation grows. Revelation has not been made; it is being made and will go on forever. The faith of a modern Theist is this, "If we seek we shall find." Faith is something more than a timid

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guarding of ancient records. It has become the soul's assurance that there is truth somewhere concerning all things we need to know. Let search be made in the right way and the truth will be found.

Ancient and outgrown seem the traditional beliefs of revelation as a supernatural event, as a supernatural breaking into the human order and the human mind from the outside, as a proclaiming of certain divine statutes to one small people, given once and for all to be rejected at the peril of one's soul. Nothing has been revealed in that sense. Someone has called that idea, "The pious whim of intellectual childhood."

### III

Julian Huxley has given us a book, *Religion without Revelation*, and it may be considered at some length as an indication of the unmistakable trend of the religious thinking of free minds. The author means that no knowledge of God's truth has been revealed to man in any supernatural way. The book is most stimulating and interesting because in it a scientific man expresses himself as a theologian. He comes by various extraordinary events, chiefly the war, to philosophize on the problems of life, on the significance of modern knowledge, on the realities of religion. His grandfather, Thomas

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Henry Huxley, was one of England's great scientists. The grand-son testifies that he had no home training in the popular religion and only formal college association with the current religious beliefs. He writes that his religious teaching was "wholly unorthodox in quality and extremely small in quantity." Yet he was bred in the fine reverences of a noble family culture and of the world of science, so that when his mind turned to the realities of religion, he went straight to those realities which he found, not on the authority of revelation but on the authority of discovery, of insight, and of interpretation. He believes that the old ideas of God are no longer adequate to the modern world and at the very end he maintains that one of the supreme needs of the world at the present time is a present-day religion.

Huxley emphasizes the capacity of the inner life of man to find a Cosmic Principle of Unity in the universe, and to feel profoundly the significance of that Unity to his own life. He dislikes to use the word "God," because it carries with it so universally the connotation of supernatural personality. We have all felt that difficulty, but I have tried to intimate that there are just inferences which help us to meet it successfully. He prefers to use another word or phrase and suggests, "Sacred Reality." I would suggest, however, that this term is significant only

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if it is made significant. There is no sacredness significant to man but moral and spiritual sacredness, the holiness of moral perfection. Then what? Then we have to put our imaginations to work and interpret Sacred Reality as something more than a philosophical abstraction, since it is an immediate, immanent, indwelling, spiritual Presence, the utmost that we can think of moral excellence, the crowning principle of our human idealism. Then we can go on and speak of "Sacred Reality" in terms of poetry, of spiritual intuition, and feel that "underneath are the everlasting arms."

Huxley emphasizes the human capacity for a sense of "the Holy." The importance of this capacity was brought home to him by J. Estlin Carpenter. The point has been emphasized by Dr. Rudolph Otto, one of the leading Protestant theologians of Germany. The point is that the moral nature of man has an innate capacity for sensing sanctity in certain events. Thus man's arrival at the idea of God, "is on a par with his discovery and formulation of purely intellectual truth, his apprehension and expression of beauty, his perception and practice of moral laws. There is no revelation concerned in it more than the revelation concerned in scientific discovery, no different kind of inspiration in the Bible from that in Shelley's poetry."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Huxley, *Religion without Revelation*, p. 43, Harper and Brothers.

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Moreover, the feeling for "the Holy" demands satisfaction and fulfillment. Huxley quotes George Eliot, from *Romola*: "The highest sort of happiness brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it to be good."<sup>2</sup> What our souls "see to be good" is the goal of our aspirations. To a modern Theist it is the goal intended for man by the universe. It is a social good and a social goal. Hence religion is a natural function of life, of life together, and it needs no supernatural revelation. In fact there is no conceivable way by which such a revelation could be made. Religion does not depend upon the authority of any reputed revelation, and where such revelation is laid aside, it is found that religion still continues as one of life's supreme interests and needs.

And so Huxley feels that the significance of religion is as "a way of life, an art like other kinds of living, and an art which must be practiced like other arts if we are to achieve anything good in it."<sup>3</sup>

A modern Theist would agree and he would point out that such a practice must be in our daily life. We must make all possible discoveries of revelation in our personal experience. The collective wisdom of mankind, in its

<sup>2</sup> Huxley, *Religion without Revelation*, p. 160, Harper and Brothers.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

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science, in its philosophy and in its age-long experience is something upon which we must continually draw, but our own experience with life is immediate and compelling to our thoughts and feelings. How searching is success! How challenging is adversity! Each has its own revelations which we discover according to the way we take them. So with all our blessings; so with all our sorrows. No great experience comes and leaves us as it finds us. We are different because we have learned something. We are different because something has been left with us. Shall it be something beautiful and true, or shall it be something false and disfiguring? It depends upon our own decisions. The right desire will move us to take the right attitude and through obedience we shall learn that which is best because we have set out to achieve it.

Some of the lessons of life are bitterly hard to learn, but our faith may well be that in this Cosmic order, which seems to expect of us the very highest idealism which we can imagine, there is truth for every error, a light for every darkness, a comfort for every grief, and a more abundant life for those who seek it.

### III

## A MODERN THEISM AND THE HUMANISTIC MOVEMENT

### I

A MODERN Theism is sharply at variance with the present humanistic movement, while in deep sympathy with much that it represents. The old idea of a supernatural, interfering, capricious Divine Providence has long been discarded. Humanity must work out its own salvation. From this point of view, modern Theism is thoroughly humanistic; but it is Humanism plus. The significance of the plus is indicated by the theistic inference that the universe is the expression of a Cosmic Intelligence "far superior to our own" but still Intelligence, akin to ours and ours to it; and further that in humanity, the universe is expressing a Moral Intelligence. In the moral and spiritual nature of man, a fact of Reality and not aside from Reality, there is something spiritually intelligible which is being expressed.

At present the issue between Theism and Humanism is in the region of a good deal of mis-

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understanding. There are different shades of Theism and different shades of Humanism. The representative of each side is tempted to exaggerate the shortcomings of the other, so that its own point of view shall appear in the light, while the other lies back in the shadow.

The humanistic point of view is not readily defined. Its philosophy ranges from the mechanistic to a near-Theistic. In the movement as a whole one thing is universal; it is pro-man, for man. I have at hand a little Humanist magazine whose caption is "not anti-God but pro-man." I am hoping that the movement will always keep that caption. Great pressure, however, is already being exerted to identify Humanism with anti-Theism. As a rule the Humanist is indifferent to our spiritual relation to the universe. He is moved by a devotion to human good and to the conviction that man must work out his own good. I suspect that such an indifference to our cosmic relation can hardly fail eventually to move into a dogmatic unbelief in anything spiritual in the nature of things. Already one frequently hears the statement that "one can be a Humanist only in proportion as he outgrows his Theism." And I suspect that however this view is dressed up, it will eventually amount to a definite anti-Theism. It will then have the problem of maintaining an en-

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thusiastic idealism in a universe believed to be indifferent to human values.

Of course, such anti-Theism may not generally come to pass in the humanistic movement and Humanism may not have this problem. Its prevailing philosophy at the moment seems to be that of evolutionary naturalism which recognizes that man is a spiritual outcome of an evolutionary process. Here he actually is, but, as I have intimated, what of it? What does the fact indicate? Philosophic naturalism recognizes an upward movement toward spiritual reality and social organization in our human world, but has the movement arrived and can it arrive at any permanent significance? If at some point the mechanical forces of Great Nature become a hostile and fatal environment to the human world, all things spiritual will disappear as though they had never been. Even now a placard with the legend, "Futile," could be affixed to the earth.

Emphasis is sometimes misleading. A Humanist declares that it is not necessary to believe in God in order to be religious, and that is a truth which a comparative study of religions makes perfectly clear. We should note that he does not say that it is necessary to disbelieve in God in order to be religious. Whether he is a naturalistic or a near-Theistic Humanist, what he says is really an encouragement to a person who has extreme difficulty in arriving at a satis-

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factory thought of God. It is encouraging to be told that one can be religious who finds a sacredness in human life to which he can consecrate himself. Such a devotion to human well-being may have the character of a religious passion. What a modern Theism can do is to charge such a religion with cosmic significance.

Humanism is at the moment a definite, searching movement of modern thought. It is idle merely to denounce it or to ignore it. It seems to represent a revolt from certain intellectual assumptions and beliefs of the past, and if one desires to counteract it and to show that it is inadequate, one must indicate the superior reasonableness of another point of view. Personally, I have not hesitated to express my indebtedness to the movement because it has compelled all Theists to be clearer in thought, more intellectually sincere, more sharp and definite in their interpretations of Reality. Great as are the difficulties confronting the modern mind, however, Theism can make a free, scientific, and philosophic approach to what the Universe is saying for itself, and can conclude, from all the evidence in nature and in human nature, that there is a Spiritual Intelligence expressing itself in Reality.

### II

Just fifty years ago Dr. Minot J. Savage preached a sermon on "The Human Provi-

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dence.”<sup>1</sup> It was a brave utterance for those days. He pointed out that in the past mankind had believed that all things were controlled by the caprices of supernatural powers, that religion was still on that basis, and that most people still believed that God was ready to step in and to control human events, particularly if enough pressure through prayer could be brought to bear upon him. He pointed out that there was a considerable system of beliefs about Divine Providence. First, there was the general Providence, expressed in God’s government of the natural world. Then there was a special Providence in which he exercised control over human affairs. And finally there was a particular Providence, in which he interfered here or there to bring some particular thing to pass which otherwise would not be brought to pass. It was the popular belief that most things, particularly if they were favorable or fortunate, were piously to be considered providential. Dr. Savage recalled an old acquaintance of his who carried that idea into the most trivial concerns of every-day life, to the finding of a lost hammer, to the chance meeting of friends, to the catching of a train. He considered everything to be providential, so that he became known among his friends as “Old Providence.” It is a tradition that a prayer of the olden time began: “It is time, O God,

<sup>1</sup>Unity Pulpit. Second Series. No. 9. 1880-1881.

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for Thee to act." Another minister, in the fervent belief that Providence should no longer delay, began his prayer with the words, "O Lord, as thou hast seen by the morning papers,"—the implication being that a crisis had arisen and that the Lord should move at once to do what should be done.

Dr. Savage pointed out that in the modern conception of the universe there can be no such Providence. All things happen in the universal reign of law and order, of cause and effect. Man must make his own world. He has a brain and he has spiritual capacities. He can and he must use both. He can find out the truth, and then the truth will make him free. He can achieve a moral triumph in his life and become supreme over circumstances that might otherwise crush him. He is in an intelligible order upon which he can depend and in which he can learn by experience. He can obey, and then he will work with God and God with him.

That was over fifty years ago, and that has been and still is the humanism of liberal religion. Its theology has begun with man. Its religious emphasis has been on man. Service to God has been through service to man. Its aspiration has been to establish the rule of the best in life, the rule of intelligence and of fraternalism. Along that line Mr. Lippmann arrives at what he calls

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“high religion,” the religion expressed in a life which has spiritually grown up into the inspirations and into the service of disinterestedness.

And so Humanism, in its emphasis on humanity, on human idealism, on the importance of concentrating the inspirations of religion upon this world's welfare, adds absolutely nothing new in principle to the humanism, the humanitarianism of the Unitarian churches. They, too, are agreed that man must work out his own salvation. But whereas the Humanist tends to ascribe that fact to the indifference of the universe, a modern Theist ascribes it to the intention of the Universe. There is an immeasurable distance between indifference and intention. The Cosmic Intelligence intends, not in a sense fatalistic but purposeful, that man shall work out his own good in an environment and with endowments which make it possible, and not only possible but divinely significant and worthwhile. If one asks me how I know, I reply that I do not know in the sense of a scientific demonstration but rather in the sense of a just inference.

It is already becoming clear that the point of difference between the Humanist and the modern Theist is over the evidential value of the spiritual nature of man as a fact in the cosmic order. There seems to be no way of reconciling that difference. A modern Theist draws inferences from the nature of man as to the nature of

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Reality and as to the character of the soul's destiny. The humanist refuses to draw such inferences because he sees no value in them or justification for them. To his objection that it is presumptuous to project human values into the vast cosmic scheme, the Theist would say that one should not be misled by the element of size. The significance of the moral and spiritual potentialities of human nature are quite a match for the vastness of mechanical forces or inorganic substances. The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes wrote, "Man hath no pre-eminence above the beasts; for all is vanity." To the modern Theist the moral and spiritual nature of man has pre-eminence. It has such transcendent significance as an attainment and as a prophecy, that it puts the whole creation under scrutiny to account for it.

### III

Man is equipped with brains for acquiring knowledge. He is in and of an order of Reality which he can increasingly know and which is always dependable. What he learns becomes his own. The truth he discovers is his. He can make use of it for further discoveries and he can correct his errors. He can walk by faith in the direction of the yet undiscovered. Science walks by faith. By walking and by working man finds his faith justified.

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Thus the universe makes it possible for man to be his own providence. Reality itself confirms man's craving for knowledge. As he seeks in right ways he finds. As he knocks, the doors of more knowledge are open to him. What he learns becomes a part of him. It is he himself. Is it an accident that it should be so? It seems far more credible to infer that it has been so intended in a universe whose ways are so universally intelligible and knowable. It is too great a strain on common-sense to suppose it to be an accident.

Moreover, the universe confirms the spiritual cravings of man's nature. Man begins as a moral infant and he is required to grow up. He must acquire his own moral understanding and strength by experience. He must win his own way, and he is equipped in his moral nature to do it. When he fails or falls, he can still learn. He may sin himself into a far country, but he can arise and go back home. An urge of idealism is native to him, and as he follows it, he makes a very important discovery. He discovers laws of spiritual being.

The discovery that there are laws of spiritual being is of supreme significance. It indicates a spiritual nature of things, a definite and concrete moral and spiritual order in which these laws are being expressed. Man finds, for instance, that spiritual things are spiritually discerned. They

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cannot be measured by yardsticks, or weighed in balances, or tried in test tubes. They are facts of worth, of quality, of value. They are truths which man must learn to perceive and to appreciate. He must acquire insight into them, he must will to possess them, and he must continue to be loyal to them. These necessities are laws of spiritual being.

Again, if man does not use his spiritual capacities he is liable to lose them. Here is a spiritual law of disuse, similar to the physical law of disuse. If physical capacities are ignored and unused, they tend to weaken and to disappear. It is similarly true with the capacities of personality. What one does not use is likely to be lost. It is the spiritual penalty for neglect. What one does not keep up is let down; another law of spiritual being.

The pure in heart see God, that is, the pure in heart have a capacity for perceiving ideal truth which the impure cannot perceive. Here is a spiritual law of perception.

Man must learn, he must grow, he must attain. But he cannot live unto himself alone; he cannot grow or attain unto himself alone. He cannot alone fulfill his highest good. The highest good is a social attainment, another law of spiritual being. Another way to express this truth is that the good-will people shall eventually inherit the earth. The testimony of history

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is revealing that fact as a law of spiritual being. It is just being perceived. Good-will is co-operative, fraternal, constructive, and possesses a power of permanence which ill-will and selfishness cannot possess.

Hence love is the fulfilling of the law. Love is the highest law. Experience reveals it as the supreme expression of the moral and spiritual law of man's life.

These truths are but intimations of the laws of spiritual being. The universe appears to be expressing itself in them and its intention through them. Can they be mere accidents? To think so is incredible. It appears to be intended that man shall work out his own spiritual salvation by discovering and by fulfilling the laws of his spiritual being. It appears that the spiritual nature of things confirms the yearnings of his native idealism, his own inner urge toward Perfection. Again, what he attains is his. It is he himself.

### IV

An impressive picture of the natural world opens before our minds as we imagine our continent when the Pilgrims landed in 1620. It is the picture of vast forests, of broad rivers, of wide prairies, immense deserts, of lofty mountain ranges, and all untouched by man except by a few tribes of savages. It took courage for

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the newcomers to face the elements of nature and to win subsistence. Could Governor Winthrop today make a flight by airplane from coast to coast and see at a glance the continent as a whole subdued to civilization; could he, on his way back, stop to visit our cities and villages, our towns and factories, our churches and schools, courts and hospitals, he would see much of evil to give him pause, but he would see how man had been his own providence, and how, by the labor of his hands, of his brain, of his democratic and humanitarian spirit, he had made here a continental habitation and a home, with a multitude of comforts, with much sweetness and goodness, much fraternalism and sympathy, vast organizations for his well-being, and a world-view of life created by the daily news from the whole earth. Man has done it! He has done it by growing up to it!

And that is what the universe has intended. There is no evidence anywhere of any particular or special Providence. We have made our own world according to what we know and according to what we are. That is our world at the present moment. It is far from being what it ought to be, but shall we now pray to some supernatural Power to step in, to neutralize our errors and our selfishness, to do for us what must be done? It is still the view of most religious people. They call upon God to step in and do

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things, to prevent wars, to stop wars, to enforce prohibition, to cure disease, to end crime, to prevent accidents, to soften hard hearts, to make employers just and employees faithful. All Fundamentalist religions are particular Providence religions. The old Theism was a particular Providence Theism. A modern Theist, however, is one with the Humanist in the belief that there is no such particular or special Providence. There is no evidence that there has ever been one and no possible way to conceive how there can be one in a Universe of Law and Order. Man has made his own world and he must continue to make it. The Universe intends that he shall, and as he learns and as he obeys, he co-operates with and fulfills that Intention.

How important it is for every human being to perceive, to acknowledge and to fulfill that Intention! It gives a cosmic value to life, a spiritual possibility and promise of infinite significance. How important it is to realize the significance of the fact that man must himself initiate co-operation with that Intention! Attainments forced upon man would not be his own; attainments acquired by him become his own. Then they have both human and cosmic meaning. Then both human aspiration and Cosmic Intention have been fulfilled.

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### V

If all this has been intended, then a little imagination helps us to infer that the Universe cares, cares in a way that we cannot begin to comprehend from the cosmic point of view, but which we can understand in part from our human point of view. That the Universe cares would seem to be a just inference from the fact that obedience works spiritually for good and disobedience for ill. The moral law is what man progressively discovers as the law of spiritual being. The law cannot be broken. Man breaks himself in his disobedience because the law holds. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The moral law cannot be deceived or evaded because it is an expression of Reality. It is something more than a matter of expediency or of good taste or of a social convention. It is a law of life. Man must discover and obey it. The "must" is the Divine Intention. The "ought" is the moral urge within him from which man cannot escape. The universe cares so much that both rewards and penalties are involved in acts themselves and teach the lesson that the way of life is the way of obedience, that the way of obedience is always open, that it is always better to be true than false, better to be right than wrong, better to be fraternal than selfish.

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The moral law of obedience is not a human invention but a human discovery. As human beings we feel that we have a moral relation to Reality, but morality means nothing apart from personalities. That conclusion should be repeated because it is of prime importance. Morality means nothing apart from personalities. If, then, we feel the moral character of the cosmic relationship at our end of it, we must feel that Personality is actually at the other end to complete the significance of the relationship—Personality, with an active, sympathetic, moral solicitude over what we make of our life in that relationship. The Great Spirit of our spirits is at the other end! And we glory in its Presence and Intention at our end.

The Cosmic Intention is that you do your best, do it yourself, do it with your own powers, do it with your own spirit, in tune with all that is good and true and beautiful, and with your spirit at one with the laws of spiritual being. When you do that, the Divine Intention for you has been done. Such a realization is a transcendent inspiration. It is Humanism plus.

Suppose something happens to darken your sky. If the universe is mere mechanical force, what you make of your trial is of no concern whatever to it. Both you and your trial are of no concern whatever to it and your feelings of littleness and loneliness, of helplessness and in-

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significance are withering. If, however, you can close your eyes and look into your soul's depths and sense the fact that the Universe cares, that it is not too big to care, that the One is immanent, present, closer to your trial than your own thoughts about it, you have a challenge, an inspiration, an encouragement to stand fast and to be steadfast, in the glory of having fulfilled the Divine Intention. The victorious assertion of your own ideal of yourself has gained something sublimely and everlastingly worthwhile. It is a moving inspiration for every effort and every sacrifice to feel that they are thus taken up into a Cosmic Order and given permanent and immortal value.

This thought deserves profound reflection. I would say—cherish that inner sense of worth and the enduring importance of spiritual mastery. Dwell upon it in the light of the noblest idealism which you can shed upon it. Cultivate it. It will be a wellspring of spiritual strength with which duty may triumph in the dark hour and thus give inward tranquillity. The thing to be borne or the thing to be done is worth all it costs not only because one's own worth is triumphant but because that triumph has brought the spirit into oneness with the Great Spirit, that is with Cosmic truth, goodness and beauty. With the soul on top, one abides in God and God in him.

## THE HUMANISTIC MOVEMENT

To the modern Theist there is a cosmic significance to the inner life of man. The glory of his life is likewise a cosmic glory. As man grows, he grows toward the Most High. His destiny is a cosmic destiny, a matter of cosmic concern. As he co-operates with the cosmic Intention, the cosmic Power is in him and back of him, as Lincoln said to the ministers who implored him to say he felt confident that God was on his side. What he hoped to do, was to find out God's side and to get on that side.

It is a comfort to realize that a Divine Intelligence directs the Cosmic Order. It is an inspiration to feel that the Divine Intention is expecting our bravest and best. When we fulfill that expectation we are on its side. Then we can feel with some assurance that our triumph is still further cherished in that Intention as a step in the development of an immortal career.

Professor Overstreet concludes his book, *The Enduring Quest*, with this paragraph: "The universe, as we now seem to see, is life of our life, spirit of our spirit. It is in us and of us. It moves in all our members. But if this is so, then every creative act we perform, small though it may be, every wish for the more nearly complete, and every will to get it achieved, is our own triumph in a universe that triumphs with us." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Overstreet, *The Enduring Quest*, p. 277, W. W. Norton and Co., Inc.

## IV

### A MODERN THEISM AND THE GREAT MYSTERIES

#### I

**I**T IS hard for us to be reconciled to the fact that our minds are finite. At one moment we seem to know a great deal, at another moment we seem to know very little. In either event we must often act on the basis of a faith which must be made as reasonable as possible.

Of all the great mysteries of human experience, life itself is first. Before there was life there was no mystery, there was no one to whom Reality could be a mystery. Moreover, there were millions of years of the development of life before it could attain the capacity to become self-conscious, to turn, as it were, on its own processes of development, and to examine itself and the outer world. It was then that mystery began.

As we look back today over the process, the emergence of the vital principle from the inorganic is still a mystery. We talk more learnedly in chemical terms, but a blank wall of mystery is there.

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Whenever we turn aside to the processes in nature, what mystery! Every winter I stop for a moment to study the geometric beauty of the snowflakes on my coat sleeve. We have all marveled at the beauty of crystals, marveled indeed, at what we have seen on every hand in nature's processes. When we turn back to life, to living forms, to human processes, we are then confronted not only with the mystery of being but with the mystery of worth.

The mystery of being is the mystery of our own being. How did we come to be, we, who are here at the moment, we with our human personalities, with marvelously individual thoughts and feelings, memories, aspirations, hopes?

Once upon a time, life appeared. That is about all that anyone can say. Processes of nature became vital. Once upon a time, there appeared a living cell which subdivided and the subdivisions began to build up into forms. As the structure wore down, new cells took their places. Cells appeared that did not wear down nor burn up but carried on the stream of vital force. Mysteries were added to mysteries. If we but knew more about them, even as mysteries, we should have a deeper reverence for the simplest forms of life.

The processes going on in living cells are marvelous beyond the power of description. Many of them seem absolutely alike to the

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keenest examination which we can put upon them, yet as they develop, the result in one direction is a plant form, in another a fish form, in another an animal form. Mystery upon mysteries!

Moreover, there are endless variations of each form. A few summers ago I was with a friend gathering moss at the top of Mount Moosilauke, in New Hampshire. I learned that the mosses are the first soil makers. I had casually noticed a few varieties, but then I learned that there are thousands of species including countless varieties, and all from single cells which seem alike.

In all plant life there seem well-nigh infinite varieties. A casual observer will see a few varieties of ferns, but the botanist knows thousands of species, thousands of species of palms, lilies, orchids, cactuses. There is a family resemblance between elm trees, fig trees and hops; the fig trees include rubber trees, banyan trees, and a vinelike parasite. I am told that there are mysteries involved both in the similarities and in the variations among these obviously dissimilar things which no man as yet knows. In the mysterious depths of microscopic cell-life, there are tendencies not only to repeat the past but to break away from the past.

The evolution of living forms belongs no more to the past than to the present. Today it is under guidance wherever there is any human in-

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terest in the value either of a repetition of the past or in a variation from the past. Such guidance is now going on all over the world in immense varieties of plant life and animal life, revealing an incredible and mysterious capacity of life, the life in single cells, to carry on and to build up. And finally in man, too, the building up goes on because of the inherited tendencies in single microscopic cells.

Man is a physical object with weight, form, size, carrying an almost constant temperature and subject to all the laws which control physical being. He is a highly chemical composite, a complex chemical laboratory, functioning through chemical processes because he is a living organism, originating from single cells, building up and reproducing through single cells. In some ways he is like a plant, in more ways he is like an animal, like the higher animals with a brain and nervous system which enable him to make more effective reactions to his environment. He is the mysterious culmination of a process which begins in mystery and continues in mystery. Much is known about him and more and more is being known, and yet mystery besets us behind and before. No real leaders of scientific thought doubt for a moment today that man is a part of nature, with his own place in the processes of nature and profoundly ennobled, as a matter of fact, by the age-long

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process which has led up to him, a process marvelous and astounding at every point. An English anthropologist was once asked in a lecture, "Are apes and monkeys our poorer relatives?" And he himself answered, "I think myself that it would be snobbery to deny it." Snobbery, religious or secular, may deny it, but the beautiful truth of evolution will continue to lead the truth-seekers as they probe the mysteries of life.

It is important here to point out that one mystery which seems to separate man from his anthropoid ancestors is the mystery of articulate speech. This attainment enables him to gain and to transmit knowledge, to build up his intelligence, to think out and to carry through purposeful living, and to exert a little freedom, marvelous beyond words even to the smallest extent, a little freedom from the laws of heredity and from the influences of environment.

Individually, we have our few moments on the great stream of living forces. Each of us is an incredible mystery of life, with all the living past behind us to account for us, with astounding and complicated tendencies of heredity transmitted to us over the microscopic bridge of a single cell. It is too wonderful for words, but Whitman has tried to sum it up:

"Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was  
even there,

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I waited unseen and always, and slept through the  
lethargic mist,

And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid  
carbon.

Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.  
Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheer-  
ful boatmen,

For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.  
All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and  
delight me,

Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul." <sup>1</sup>

### II

Life is an incarnation of mystery because in and through it are the manifestations of infinities. The more we discover the more we are made to realize that there is yet more to know, infinitely more. That being so, the modern Theist would modestly insist that it is a mistake ever to lose courage, ever merely to condemn, to become cynical or skeptical simply because the nature of things, the reason for things, is not plain to our twentieth century judgments which too often we assume ought to be the measure of all things. Why pain, why evil, why frustration and death? Why? The answer is that we do not know why. That must be said clearly and definitely. The answer is involved in the in-

<sup>1</sup> Whitman, "Song of Myself."

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finities. Our comprehension is along finite lines. What we have to do is to take an attitude so positive and so high-minded that we shall be true to our own highest ideals and thus, in spite of the mystery, achieve the best results in life. More and more it becomes plain that that is the intention of the Infinite, and that thus the intention is fulfilled.

I have said that life is an incarnation of mystery. What does that mean? Apparently it means whatever highest value we can give to it. Mysterious power of intelligence—we must use it to become more and more intelligent. Mysterious power of moral idealism—we must use it to fulfill the highest capacities of life. Always to do our best with life! Then, strangely mysterious, when we have done our best, mystery seems to become merely incidental. Surely it is significant that mystery should seem to be of secondary importance when we have done our best with life, yet that seems to be the fact.

The inclination to challenge all things, including the universe, with whatever intellectual yardsticks we have, begins in our youth. It is a curious characteristic of our inner life that we never seem to sense the presence of mystery in the things that give us satisfaction and happiness. Mystery in the innumerable processes in bodily life, mysteries of the life within—the thoughts and feelings, the pictures and visions

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and memories, the hopes and aspirations and faiths, all marvelous beyond our understanding; the extraordinary rhythm of nature's designs, the loveliness of sunsets and sunrises—we do not bother and debate and argue about such mysteries. We may be awed at times, yet we take the joy and ignore the mystery.

In youth, particularly, we are distressed by the mystery of frustration and by the furies which pursue us for our sins. The evil that men do which not only lives after them but lives with them and spreads from them—it is such things that hurt and destroy which impress and depress youth and lead to a complete condemnation of the whole scheme of things. The mysteries which bring us gladness are scarcely noticed, but the mysteries which bring us pain are assumed to be hostile to us and unmindful of us. We note the mystery but ignore the significance of the experience. A young poet takes his life because he cannot see any meaning to life. It is an extreme intellectual skepticism. More commonly there is an extreme moral skepticism in the youthful “go-getters,” whose moral code is summed up in the ambition to “get what you go after,” whose cleverness is not under the direction of any moral principle. And then the penalty imposed by the moral nature of things is carried out. With no moral purpose, there is no moral meaning or achievement.

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Gradually we discover that we cannot measure the scheme of things by any yardstick now in human possession. We discover that we can progress, slowly it may be but with honor; that we can build up ability to do things well; that we can reduce the evil which men do to each other; that we can do good and enrich our inner life; and then mystery seems naturally to become incidental, or it is referred to the infinities where it belongs. We realize when we come sharply up to it, that mystery does not comprise the whole of life.

When the creative process brings us forth, we then have to bring forth our own creative powers and co-operate with it. To that end we are mysteriously endowed with the vision of the ideal and with a divine unrest until we have done our best to realize that ideal. A man says to his minister, "The ideal is for you but not for me. The ideal is your business but the real is my business." And the minister replies, "The real is as much my business as yours, and the ideal is as much your business as mine."

When a modern theism becomes a practical religion, it is to the end that the ideal in any and every job shall be sought and served. Any work which has any good reason for being has its ideal aspects and interests. The craftsman at his trade, the merchant in his store, the professional man of any kind, the worker at any work—all can

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feel the aspiration to do better, something finer, a better service. The ideal is for all and should be in all. "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" The moral nature of man has its own mysterious answer: "Do your best!" In spite of frustration, in spite of the cross of pain and the burdens of evil and the penalties of sin—do your best now. Do it now!

That takes effort. Apparently we do not begin to question things until they begin to take effort. But in the mysterious dispensation of life, effort is required to live, effort is required to live at one's best, effort is required for the attainment of anything worth attaining.

A friend of mine was struck down by a sentence of death in the full flush of her beautiful and useful and needed life. What a mystery! All canons of our narrow, earthly, finite judgments were violated by this sentence. And she? She simply did her best to get above disappointment and sorrow, to be as little trouble to others as possible, and to make things as beautiful and hopeful for others as she could, to be brave and patient and to help others to be brave and patient. She simply did her best until the sentence of death was executed. What an effort, and yet what a life and what an end, a great, glorious, beautiful life and a beautiful and convincing and inspiring end! We call it an untimely end, but how do we know? The mystery of it is be-

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yond us, but the glory and the truth of it, the beauty and the goodness of it, we can comprehend at least in part. Here is the point. With all life's mysteries she made it grandly significant. In the presence of the mystery and under the burden of the mystery she took a positive and an ideal attitude toward her life. And that, a modern Theist is persuaded, is the Divine Intention which is thus revealed as such a life comes to its glorious end on this earth.

In the presence of the mystery of life the gospel of the modern Theist is—hold to your idealism, cleave to that which is best, and while the mystery remains, you have made friends with it. The storms of life may try to uproot you, but if your idealism holds and if you hold to it, you may bend to the storm, but you are not uprooted.

Preston Bradley tells the story of the lumberman in the Alps of Italy: "I stood watching a stream in the Alps in Italy once, and I saw a picturesque lumberman. The lumbermen were working with the logs that were coming down from the hillsides. I saw him selecting these logs. I could not see any external distinction in them, and finally I said to him, 'What about these logs? You are putting some here and these you let pass by.' He said, 'Why, you see that log there? That log came from the valley in the lowlands. It never was buffeted by the winds and storms and tempests; that log grew

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straight up with coarse grain; it never had to fight, that log.' And he said, 'So we keep it for the poorer lumber. Its grain is coarse. But you see that log there? That log came from the crags and the hill-tops; that log came from a tree that stood there and faced the elements; that lumber has been bent and twisted and broken by the winds from the time it was a little sapling; that log has been compelled to fight to become a tree, and the result of the warfare is that that log has a fine grain; that log makes perfect timber and it goes into the finest furniture that is made in Italy.' " <sup>2</sup> What a mystery—that the finer grain of life should be created out of the very strains and stresses that threaten to destroy it! Mystery, indeed, but divine are the results.

### III

If we can speak of life as the Birth of Mystery, we can refer to pain as the Burden of Mystery. It is such a burden upon human life that one dreads to appear heartless in presuming to speak of it in any detached way. One can but hope to suggest certain positive attitudes of faith, attitudes of mind and heart which help to give us courage and which make the most of what little light we have from our limited finite judgments.

<sup>2</sup> *The Liberal*, March, 1927.

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When Paul declared in his letter to the Romans, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," he uttered a terrible truth. No sentient creature is immune from pain. One notes that one's Christian Science friends are not immune. To call pain an error of mortal mind, does not alter the fact. The fact is pain. To call it an error is a method of cure; it does not deprive the pain from having been a fact.

The mind has some influence over some pain; that fact was known to the ancients. To assume, however, that the mind can be absolute in power over pain is to cut the truth in half and to ignore one half. They who suffer, know the reality of pain. The convincing power of a minute of such experience is greater than that provided by years of theory.

A minister is very close to the burden of pain. He may personally be comparatively free from it, yet it is ever at hand. For some time I was chairman of the Citizens Committee of a city hospital. I have been much among sufferers, I have heard the agonized cries of children. I know the burden of pain. In the presence of it my lips are sealed except in sympathy. Yet, when we reason quietly about it, it is necessary to take a detached view. There is much which ought no longer to be believed about the burden of pain and much which is added to the burden

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of pain which ought to be discarded. One of the best men I have known was for years a great sufferer. Time and again I have heard his friends say, "I cannot see why a man like that has to suffer so." Not long ago a friend of mine lost his wife after a cruel illness. A friend of his said to me, "I cannot see why such a man needs a chastening like that." All such statements reflect the views of a past time.

Pain, whether of soul or body, has been thought of as a punishment; it has been referred to in terms of retribution. The modern Theist would try to free the world from all such ideas. It is not easy because such views have been bred within the mind for countless ages. All pain has been thought of as punishment for sinful violation of the divine will, and the only real problem arose when it was observed that at times the wicked rejoiced and the good suffered. The way of the transgressor might be hard, but the way of his mother was even harder. The suffering, however, was assumed to be an evidence of wrong-doing somewhere. "The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth have been set on edge." All this was indeed a great problem and the mystery deepened because of the fact that animals, too, suffered pain and were not responsible for a violation of the divine will.

The mystery of pain still remains, but the whole aspect of it has changed. The change is

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one of the inestimable blessings of the theory of evolution and of a deeper knowledge in the modern world of the vital processes. It should never occur to us again that pain is punishment. There should today be no slightest connection between the two in our minds. We should never say, "What have I done that I should suffer so?" "Why should my friend, one of the best of friends, one of the best of men, be so chastened?" "Why am I singled out?" No one is singled out. We are all in the human family and the laws of life are fixed for the whole family, indeed, for the whole sentient family. The mystery of pain is not my mystery nor your mystery but humanity's mystery.

From the point of view of the principle of evolution, the whole punishment idea of pain is now replaced by the concept of pain as "economic value." That term seems brutally technical, and if I had a particular pain, I should probably have some difficulty in discovering its economic value. Yet, it would be worth something to me to know that modern science now regards pain as a vital product, as specific as the five senses, as natural as sight and hearing. The five senses are results brought about in the upbuilding life processes. They become not only ends but means to ends. Professor H. W. Carr has said "Pain is not punitive; it is a form of consciousness with distinctive quality and value.

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It is a mode of sentience contrived for an economic function and having a distinctly utilitarian end. The mystery of pain for the evolutionist is not to discover why it exists, but only to interpret its economic value in particular cases.”<sup>3</sup>

Pain is a biological factor with a specific and positive function in the scheme of living activities. We can call it a penalty at times if we have disobeyed some law of life, or someone has disobeyed, but there is a world of difference in regarding it as an arbitrary punishment imposed for disobedience by an angry deity and in thinking of it as a specific result which follows naturally and inevitably from the working out of natural law. Indeed, no one may be morally blameworthy in certain cases.

There is a world of difference between the traditional theological doctrine and the scientific doctrine of pain in their influence upon our theory of life. The theological doctrine has been terrible beyond words in its own infliction of pain upon human souls. Ghastly sufferings have been inflicted upon human beings in all the world's history in order to placate supernatural powers. Noble literature tells about the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter and of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, yet the burden of the pain is there, terrible and revolting. In the theological doc-

<sup>3</sup> Carr, *Changing Backgrounds in Religion and Ethics*, p. 198, Macmillan Co.

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trine, pain has been the punishment for sin and pain has been inflicted upon the innocent to lift a supposed burden of guilt. The burden of the mystery of the pain has been doubled by the pain which men have inflicted upon each other and very largely from this mistaken theological doctrine.

The whole Christian theology has rested on this error. The pain of toil and the pain of child-bearing have been regarded as punishments for the sin in the Garden of Eden. For a long time the church opposed the giving of an anæsthetic in childbirth because the pain had been imposed on woman for her transgression in the Garden of Eden. The guilt for the transgression was assumed to be passed on to all succeeding generations, putting the whole of humanity at enmity with God. No salvation could be conceived without an adequate and just suffering of pain. The human race could not itself suffer sufficiently. Consequently, the Second Person in the Godhead must needs dwell among men and take upon himself such an experience of pain as to lift the burden of guilt from the human race. Only so could the divine justice be satisfied. Only so could the professing Christian appropriate the blessings of the atoning death of Christ. It should be said that a modern Christian Theist today has no sympathy with this traditional form of atonement.

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In so far as we appropriate the blessings of a modern religion, we can determine our attitude toward the great mystery of pain with the inspirations of science and of modern idealism. Pain is a terrible fact, a hard and dreadful experience, but the justification of the burden must be referred to the nature of things. Why the nature of things is as it is, is the mystery, the mystery of infinities and universals, of realities involving processes and purposes which our finite minds cannot fathom. What we can see is that the nature of things is universal, the same for all; that in the living processes which have somehow emerged, sensation is first, fundamental, and essential to life. Without sensation there could be no life. With sensation there must be a capacity both for pleasure and for pain. In the upward development of life, the capacity to feel represented an immense stride upward. Without it growth would have ceased. With it appeared the prophecy of humanity with all its noble attainments and possibilities. All that is involved in life and spirit, in character and intellectual power, depends upon the capacity to feel, and the capacity to feel involves a capacity to feel pain. We cannot conceive a sentient being capable of feeling pleasure only. When we are suffering, we can but think of pain as an un-mixed evil, but the fact that it is a universal experience of all sentient life, shows that in the

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nature of things it must have some ministry of purpose.

The biological necessity for pain is expressed in the body and there are pain spots as there are heat and cold and touch spots—pain spots with their own particular sensory nerve endings responding to their own particular stimulation. Pain then is a positive agent, essential to life and essential to the spiritual life. All that is involved in spiritual strength, aspiration, insight, depends upon the capacity to feel, to feel pleasantly and to feel painfully, to feel joyfully and to feel sorrowfully. If it is a blessing to have life, to feel the urge for knowledge, for truth, goodness and beauty, to feel intimations of what eye hath not seen or ear heard, the possibility of pain is not altogether an evil. To develop beings with sympathy, to create a brotherhood, to make men capable of service, of sacrifice, of unselfishness, they must be able to feel. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin"; and one touch of pain makes all men brothers.

From such a point of view a brave soul has put his convictions, his faiths and hopes into these moving lines:

"The cry of man's anguish went up unto God:

    'Lord, take away pain —

The shadow that darkens the world thou hast made,

    The close-coiling chain

That strangles the heart, the burden that weighs

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On the wings that would soar —  
Lord, take away pain from the world thou hast made,  
That it love thee the more!

Then answered the Lord to the cry of his world:  
‘Shall I take away pain,  
And with it the power of the soul to endure,  
Made strong by the strain?  
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,  
And sacrifice high?  
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire  
White brows to the sky?  
Shall I take away love, that redeems with a price  
And smiles at its loss?  
Can ye spare from your lives, that would climb unto  
mine,  
The Christ on his cross?’ ”<sup>4</sup>

“The Christ on his cross?” Jesus stands as a type of humanity. In his suffering he represents a suffering humanity. There he is, immortalized in the gospels, the demonstration of the human in a supreme spiritual triumph. There is the spiritual pain in the Garden of Gethsemane. There is the physical pain on the Cross. He accepts both. He is not bitter nor resentful, hard nor sullen. He prays the Father to “forgive them, for they know not what they do.” There he is, typifying the supremacy of the spirit. He is no exception in his capacity to suffer pain. Why was he singled out? Why did he not de-

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous. *British Weekly*.

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serve a happy life? Such questions do not occur to us. He, too, was subject to the laws of life and suffering met him on the path of his mission, but he triumphed over it and in it.

It is the faith of a modern Theist that the triumph of his cross and of all crosses of suffering, are worth all they cost. It is a conclusion of faith, but such a faith sends a ray of light into the mystery of pain. We all have in us the Christ-spirit, to be brought into the fullness of life as it was in the Man of Nazareth. And so, we should try to learn all that the Cross has to tell. It may be that it is, for us, the answer to the mystery, that through suffering we, too, can be made perfect, strong and tender, merciful, sympathetic and just. It is an answer of mystery and yet an answer of light and leading to those who have seen to the heart of it. And we can learn so much! We learn that we must not dwell on it too much. We must not indulge in self-pity. We must be heroic with ourselves. Furthermore, we must let others in pain see that we understand. We must try to express our insight, not austere and arrogantly but kindly. We must not be shut up in our own suffering; we must try to keep open a broad gate through which we can behold other sufferers as they pass by.

The positive attitude toward the mystery of pain is so to regard it as to appreciate its driving

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power in creative processes of evolution, to understand its warning significance, to encourage all wise efforts to prevent it or to alleviate it, to obey the laws of life as a means of avoiding it, to bear it with as much courage and patience as possible when it comes, realizing that it is a natural necessity and not a wilful and cruel imposition by an angry deity; and, furthermore, to sympathize with all sufferers and to help them to bear.

The modern Theist is not disposed to indulge in any mawkish and pious sentimentality and to free God himself from any responsibility in this matter. The Burden of Pain emerges out of the universe as an awful and mysterious necessity. Because we can today see its creative results, we can have a faith that the universe will justify its responsibility as our minds enlarge to perceive its meaning. A moral universe involves the promise of some such "far off divine event" toward which the creative processes of moral and spiritual growth are tending. There is a burden of mystery in pain beyond our comprehension because there is the urge of infinite meaning in it, yet we have some light upon it. With that light we can determine our spiritual direction, bearing and helping others to bear the burden, and we can feel that there must be a sympathy in the heart of God for what must be borne.

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It is said that we seek religion when we are in trouble. And there is something significantly true about that fact. The sense of pain moves us to seek sympathy and companionship. We turn to one another and we help one another, but the burden of pain also turns us to God for his sympathy and companionship, and there is nothing small or unworthy in that experience. It is rather something instinctive and noble. We have got to have help! And so a comforting sense of companionship grows up between suffering souls and the Great Soul. In that sense of companionship the burden of mystery and of all mysteries is lightened.

“’Tis not that God loves mystery,  
The things beyond us we can never know  
Until up to their lofty height we grow,  
And finite grasps infinity.”<sup>5</sup>

### IV

If we think of Life as the Birth of Mystery, of Pain as the Burden of Mystery, we may think of Evil as the Darkness of Mystery.

Evil is a pall upon creation. There may be shades of its darkness, but darkness it always is. Its black shadow is across our inner life and across the life of the great world. It is here—a

<sup>5</sup> M. J. Savage, *Light on the Cloud*, p. 38, Lockwood, Brooks & Co.

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mystery and a darkness of mystery. No philosopher has ever been able to lift its shadow from the earth.

The idealism of the human spirit, however, has struggled against this darkness—to penetrate it with hope, and to dispel it by faith. As one looks back over the age-long struggle, he is forced to see that this darkness of mystery, this disorder of moral conflict in our human world, has emerged out of the universe itself. A most astonishing and triumphant statement of this fact appears in the words of Isaiah, XLV :7,

“I form the light and create darkness ; I make peace and  
create evil ;  
I am the Lord, that doeth all these things.”

The moral unity of the universe has never been better expressed. Mystery—but a mystery involved in the nature of things, in the very nature of the moral life. Along the line of that suggestion, there is a possible opening in the mystery for a ray of light.

The ancients assumed evil gods, devils, malignant spirits and a hostile invasion of the world which led it astray. The myth of the Fall of Man tells us that God created Adam and Eve as moral babes, put them into conditions of life where they were doomed to sin at the first silly temptation; and was then surprised and angry when they did sin and put upon them and upon

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their descendants an everlasting curse. Such assumptions are childish. It has been easy to start with them, but impossible to arrive anywhere with them.

A civilized theology must start with the recognition of the fact that the moral nature of the human soul is God-given. The necessity for moral freedom is God-given. The moral nature of things is such that there can be no moral character of any divine significance whatever which has not been attained through a struggle with evil. The gospel writers must have had this thought in mind when they said that Jesus was tempted as we are. That necessity for moral freedom is the ultimate mystery. No human philosophy can dispel the shadow involved in it, but human souls have a God-given capacity for a moral idealism which penetrates the shadow with faith and hope and aspiration.

From the point of view of evolution the whole aspect of the mystery changes. The old theology was wrongly based on a fall; the new theology is based on an ascent. The rise of man is the cornerstone of the twentieth century faith. From the point of view of that faith we can see that evil is here to be left behind, to be conquered and put down. Religion today must give us a fighting spirit. It must inspire us to moral victory both in ourselves and in the world. So long as we live we have a fight on our hands. We must

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win this war. There is no hopeless defeat. If and when we fall, we can always get up and move forward again. Every victory solves the immediate problem and every victory sheds a ray of light in the direction of the ultimate mystery. Every victory is worth its cost, and in the glory of that fact the shadow of mystery begins to lift.

To dwell on some of these statements at greater length, it is evident that the modern Theist is an evolutionist. Out of the universe of Great Nature, on this small planet, the process of creation has led up to the emergence of humanity, to a being who recognizes that there is a good and an evil, who has a divine capacity to be faithful or unfaithful. It is impossible for a modern Theist to think that God was surprised or angry at the appearance of moral evil. It is impossible to think that God could curse the sinful man. In a universe of law and order He would subject him to penalties as inevitable results. Simply to make him suffer as punishment? No, that would be ethically futile, but rather to teach him, to compel him to make his own the lessons of experience, to lead him on and to bring him up.

There is thus a polar difference between the theology of historic Christianity and the theology of a modern Theist. According to the former, the penalties for moral imperfection were

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punishments and were meant to disclose God's anger for sin. According to the latter, the penalties are inevitable results and meant to reveal the divine purpose that man shall grow into a knowledge of God by learning what Godness, that is, goodness, means and by making it triumphant.

The darkness of the mystery of evil is not dispelled by ignoring it. One must not be misled by any sophistries of ancient or modern thought into assuming that evil is an illusion of the mind. There never has been and there is not now a satisfactory philosophy which can thus explain away the fact of evil. It is noticeable that people who are complacent about it are not found in large numbers trying to lift its burdens from the world.

Modern theism deals with a mystery of evil which is not arbitrary and wilful but a mystery of the universal nature of things. It is impossible for us to conceive of a world in which two plus two equals five, or in which there can be two mountains without a valley between them or where a righteous character can be formed except through moral freedom. The only sinlessness which can have any moral significance is that which represents a real triumph over evil.

Assuming that Jesus possessed supernatural character, his triumph was theatrical and unmeaning to our human experience. As a human

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being himself, however, his triumph is full of meaning. The dogma of his sinlessness has no place in modern theism both because it is a mere dogma and because it would have no ethical significance if true. The impressive thing in the gospel story is that as his character emerges in the gospel story, it has become morally and spiritually invincible. He has become supreme in his mission. He will bear witness to the truth. He will not yield to any temptation because he has become master of himself and of his mission. Throughout the story, however, he is humanly sympathetic and encouraging, flaming in wrath only toward hypocrisy and pretense. It is an impressive thing to remember that Jesus is not chiefly a denouncer of sin. He is a proclaimer of life. "I came that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

The mind of the modern Theist is reassured by the thought that man is being brought along the way of moral conflict to just such a triumph over temptation, the way toward the abundant life. Each of us is on that way. Sometimes it is a terrible and terrifying way. Darkness of Mystery! Blackness of Mystery! It is only when we can stand off from it in a detached way that we can have any faith that the soul of man can come to the goal of a final triumph. It is good, however, to take that detached view once

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in a while because it helps to inspire that positive attitude which is so absolutely necessary for human souls to take.

Why is the nature of things as it is? Why has God created a humanity which must pass through a blundering, suffering, sinful and ignorant weakness? Is it just? It is not just if God established the conditions and then cursed man for yielding to them. It is just if it is the only conceivable way by which to create souls of moral worth. It is just if He is correcting not in anger but in love, if His laws of life can make good the goal toward which the process of creation is tending. It is just if the goal is so divinely worthwhile that the cost is justified. And in great conquering souls the cost seems justified. Such an observation gives us at least a basis for trust that the nature of things has an ultimate moral significance. The moral tendency of creation is under the direction of a moral purpose. Each individual life is in and a part of that purpose, and can be made significant to that purpose.

It appears that in the God-established nature of things, everything costs, everything has to be paid for. Both God and man seem to be subject to this principle of cost. Moral harmony can be established only at a cost of moral effort and struggle, of pain and of suffering. To see, however, that there is a real glory in moral victory, is to run a line of reasonableness through this

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revelation of the nature of things.

In modern theism there is never a thought that moral imperfection is a disclosure of an essentially evil nature. When a man sins through his self-will, it does not show that his will is essentially evil. It does not show the triumph of an essentially evil principle in the nature of things. It shows that the moral laws hold, that the defiance was futile, that man has had a lesson in the laws of his spiritual being. Always we see that evil is left behind when there is an increase of moral strength and insight; and so one may infer that as darkness disappears wherever the light penetrates, so evil disappears wherever goodness penetrates.

This theory of the moral nature of things, that is, of the moral nature of man, confronts us with the practical alternative in life which is clear and simple. Our capacity to go wrong must be mastered by our capacity to keep right. The alternative is: self-control or not, life or death, success or failure; the alternative is simple. There is a war in our members. We are a battle of forces. Some push upward and others pull downward. There is a selfish urge to get what we want, to shun effort, sacrifice, cost. You have it, I have it. What to do? Win the war! Modern theism points out that our only safety is in that positive attitude toward the fact of evil in ourselves and in the world. We must get on top

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of our own evil and make it a part of our life business to help the world to get on top of its evil. The ultimate mystery is beyond us, but there is always an issue at hand which throws some light upon it. The specific evil has come to be overcome. We cannot be neutral or complacent, impartial or indifferent. We have got to enlist against the evil. Judas sold his friend. Such things are abhorrent. Great minds and hearts revert to the beast. Such things are abhorrent. They that are strong sometimes exploit the weak. Such things are abhorrent. The Great War laid upon humanity incalculable sufferings. Such things are abhorrent.

Evil is a terrible fact. We ought not to suspect that it is less than it appears to be, because it is immeasurably greater than any one individual can imagine it to be. There it is, always a threat, always a possibility of disaster. There is always in us the possible urge to ruin through appetite, selfishness, the lust for immediate gain, immediate pleasure, by saying the word or doing the deed that mean life-long regret.

The urge of wilfulness must be fought. It must be conquered. It must be met in the open and fought to a finish. And yet, not always. Sometimes, it is better to go around it, to avoid it or to run away from it, if possible; to think of something else, to do something else. It is well not to think too highly of our fighting powers.

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We do not know our strength on the one hand or our breaking point on the other, and we cannot afford to trifle with temptation. It is in youth that the war is often won or lost. Youth knows the fact and the threat of evil, but youth should know them not for pessimism but for optimism. When youth says, "This is wrong," youth not only means it but feels instinctively that the wrong should be fought. Youth should then remember not only that the evil is in our nature, but the urge to fight it is also in our nature. That urge indeed is the fundamental fact about us. The moral instinct to win the war has likewise emerged out of the universe and the great souls of this war show us the supreme significance of it. Did Lincoln say to the institution of slavery, "That thing I mean to hit and to hit hard"? There seems to be doubt about the historical truth of the quotation, but it is the thing to say in the presence of any evil institution.

As long as we live, we have the fight on our hands. There is no discharge in this war. But as long as we live we can have the power, the resources, the purpose to win. Get on top of the evil and put it down or put it away. Every victory solves the immediate issue and every victory leads the way toward the final solution of the mystery. The ultimate mystery is written in the Unseen: "I form the light and create darkness.

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I make peace and create evil. I am the Lord that doeth all these things." When that creative purpose reaches us, it is a terrifying shadow of mystery, but when we win either in ourselves or in the great world, the shadow begins to lift. There is a voice of encouragement: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." We are to choose the right. We are to get started upward, we are to make for character, we are to pay all the costs in effort and in sacrifice. We are to be inspired by the examples of great lives, we are to bear our witness to the truth. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." The mystery remains, and yet a divine purpose begins to shine through it.

### V

We may think of Death as the Continuing Mystery.

Jesus is reported to have referred to the end of the present order of the world in the words, "Of that hour, knoweth no man." Thus has the world thought of the hour of death, of the mystery of its coming, "Of that hour, knoweth no man."

"Leaves have their time to fall,  
And flowers to wither at the north  
wind's breath,  
And stars to set—but all,  
Thou hast ALL seasons for thine  
own, O Death!

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We know when moons shall wane,  
When summer birds from far shall  
cross the sea,  
When autumn's hue shall tinge the  
golden grain —  
But who shall teach us when to  
look for thee!"<sup>6</sup>

The mystery of the hour of death has been one of its terrifying aspects, but not the only one. The ancient writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews referred to those "who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Multitudes have been and are still in this bondage of fear. Jeremy Taylor declared, "Of all the evils of the world which are reproached with an evil character, death is the most innocent of its accusation." That was a brave utterance in his day. In the modern world Edward Rowland Sill has given us a beautiful expression of the same judgment:

What if some morning, when the stars were paling,  
And the dawn whitened, and the East was clear,  
Strange peace and rest fell on me from the presence  
Of a benignant Spirit standing near:

And I should tell him, as he stood beside me,  
"This is our Earth—most friendly Earth, and fair;  
Daily its sea and shore through sun and shadow  
Faithful it turns, robed in its azure air:

<sup>6</sup> Author unknown.

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"There is blest living here, loving and serving,  
And quest of truth, and serene friendships dear;  
But stay not, Spirit! Earth has one destroyer —  
His name is Death: flee, lest he find thee here!"

And what if then, while the still morning brightened,  
And freshened in the elm the Summer's breath,  
Should gravely smile on me the gentle angel  
And take my hand and say, "My name is Death!"

Why should so many people today be quite unable to think of the Angel of Death as a companion beautiful of the Angel of Life? Because they are still under the bondage of ancient fears, fears that should long ago have been outgrown, false fears of a something in the horrid shape of a skeleton with grinning skull, with scythe or brandishing dart, coursing over the earth, up one street and down another seeking victims—Death, the last, greatest, invincible enemy to hearts and homes.

Surely the mystery of death should now be free from the false fancies of an outgrown past. If one insist that we know no more of the incident of death than did the ancient world, we may reply that because we know more of life, we can reason more clearly about death, reason away all inventions which arouse fear, reason more hopeful and attractive probabilities, reason calmly and broadly as we do about other mysteries of life.

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The notion that death came into the world as something outside of natural law as a punishment for man's sin, is one of the false fancies of the past. Death was in the world long before man came to sin. It appears to be as much in the divine order as life.

Another false fancy has been to regard the coming of death as an unmitigated calamity, the triumph of man's chief enemy, the final confirmation that life is a tragedy. Few of the poets of the past have risen out of the minor key.

"Oh, when I touch Time's farthest brink,  
A kindlier solace shall attend.  
It chills my very soul to think  
Of that dread hour when life shall end."

How different the thought of the Unitarian Quaker, Whittier:

"And so beside the Silent Sea,  
I wait the muffled oar;  
No harm from Him can come to me  
On ocean or on shore."

To those who are left, the death of a loved one may be an unmitigated calamity, but to the one who dies, who shall say with confidence that it is a calamity? Even in the ancient world, Seneca lifted his voice of protest, "It were rash to condemn that which we do not understand."

From the ancient world also came a protest

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against the fear of burial. The body is committed to the ground, but as Socrates declared, "The spirit is not there." "Is it not strange, my friends, that after all I have said to convince you I am going to the society of the happy, you still think this body to be Socrates? Bury my lifeless body where you please, but do not mourn over it as if that were Socrates."

We should also banish the fear that the moment of death is an experience of pain, a struggle with a dread presence. The testimony seems to show that the experience of death is apparently without pain. People who have been near to death say that their sensations were not painful. Pain comes before death. Pain accompanies disease or injury, but when the issue is finally decided, the experience of death itself seems to be unfelt so far as physical sensations go. They are more likely either to be nothing at all, a quiet going to sleep, or something peaceful, as of a sweet deliverance.

"We thought her dying when she slept  
And sleeping when she died."

There are times when the mystery of a premature death is all but overwhelming, the death of little children, of young men and young women, of husbands and fathers, of wives and mothers, dying as we say, before their time, leaving sad burdens of care and responsibility. Why

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does God permit it? It does not occur to a modern Theist to raise the question in that form. Death is not something that is permitted as though it were in some way an interference which might be prevented. All things, including all things of life and of death, are under the universal laws of life, and the mystery of the premature death is in the mystery of the nature of things, in the mystery of the infinite processes involving life.

The modern Theist would emphasize the point that the mystery of death is really one of the mysteries of life. It is life not death, which is meant, until the bodily forces falter with age and the machinery runs down; then the body seems to have an instinct for death. It is as welcome as going to sleep. We know such cases and we say they are natural and beautiful and should be universal; yet, as a matter of fact, they are not universal. Mystery remains in the untimely death as well as in death itself. There are times when one cannot speak in the presence of it because it is too unspeakably sad. One can only stand by with sympathy and understanding. Of his grief at the death of his little girl, Lowell said:

“Console if you will; I can bear it:  
Tis a well-meant alms of breath;  
But not all the preaching since Adam  
Hath made Death other than Death.”

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Modern science and the idealism of modern philosophy are today bringing about a spiritual revolution both in the thought of life and in the thought of death. And as with the other mysteries, we can now go on with the somewhat detached attitude toward the mystery of death. At any moment its mystery may overwhelm us with sorrow, but it is well to take some time to meditate upon it when we can marshal our most reasonable faiths concerning it.

### VI

Personally, I have found that when people are free to think what seems to them to be true, they face the mystery of death according to the measure of their intelligent appreciation of life. If one thinks well of life, he is likely to think well of death. If life has little of intrinsic value, it is thought of as something cheap and transitory. Where there are no high ideals, no thought of lofty possibilities of life, no thought of the transcendent glory of humanity, the natural conclusion has been that this vain thing deserves to end. I remember that that was the reaction of a man who assured me that, "Human nature is the meanest thing on earth." I imagine that the Bible writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes had some such idea when he wrote that "man hath no preeminence above the beasts; as the one dieth, so dieth the other."

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If, on the other hand, one sees a glory in the moral nature of man even when life is a tragedy, if one appreciates and spiritually estimates the divine quality of human powers seeking expression, struggling to emerge triumphantly, if one can measure even feebly the glory of man's spiritual nature, its beauty and promise and wonder, even in the humblest, then it becomes well-nigh impossible to resist the conclusion that death is not the end of such a being; that it can be but an incident in such a life; that death is in the divine order of life and not life in the divine order of death. When we feel the significance of these qualities of life which we instinctively cherish and reverence, then they appear to us in the character of immortal qualities, qualities of immortal worth, and we feel that they are naturally and beautifully carried through the incident of death, continuing, that is, the mystery of life.

I have seen a company of men agree as to the deathless quality of a friend, a man of exceptional power of personality and of significant life. Some members of the company had before been open disbelievers in the continuance of life after death, but the annihilation of such a being as their friend, seemed an affront to their reason. I believe that there is a significant approach to the real truth of the soul's destiny in these instinctive moral judgments.

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The modern Theist finds a significant approach to the truth of the soul's destiny in what might be called eternal-value judgments. We have reached the time when the transcendent mysteries of life can dominate our sense of the mystery of death. Life is the supreme thing. The spiritual life is the supreme aspect of life. That out of the universe should appear human personalities, is the sublime fact of creation. Its spiritual significance is so great that it must penetrate the mystery of death and reinterpret death not as an end of life but as an incident in life, an incident through which life continues its significant career.

That is, to the mystery of death, we put a question mark as we do to the first day of the new year, a question mark to symbolize the mystery of the Unknown. The mystery of death is but one aspect of the mystery of the Unknown, the continuing mystery of life in the Unknown. Blanco White suggests this mystery very beautifully in a sonnet:

“Mysterious night! when our first parent knew  
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,  
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,  
This glorious canopy of light and blue?”

Yet, 'neath the curtain of translucent dew,  
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,  
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,  
And lo! creation widened in man's view.

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Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed  
Within thy beams, O sun! or who could find,  
While leaf and fly and insect lay revealed,  
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!  
Why do we, then, shun death with anxious strife?  
If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life?"

During the day we can see but one world, but at night the day has gone, countless worlds come into view, and the poet feels that the light of life must likewise conceal much which lies beyond.

The modern Theist feels that it is not only legitimate but necessary to follow through such a reasonable interpretation of what seems to be the moral implication in the spiritual nature of man. Said an ancient poet, "God made man to be immortal." In its fruitful theory of evolution, science has helped incalculably to give us a penetrating vision through the mystery of death. From the far off beginnings of life, there has been a steady progress toward the spiritual man and toward the spiritual mastery of life. Humanity has sublime significance from this point of view. Its history of effort and of struggle to climb out of ignorance and weakness has transcendent meaning. We are led to interpret human life as the crowning opportunity for spiritual growth, development, attainment, for the fulfilment of the spiritual possibilities in all humanity.

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In the individual life, however, the opportunity is not adequate and it is in the individual struggle that the opportunity has moral and spiritual significance. In the earthly span of life there is time but for a beginning. There is no adequate opportunity for spiritual growth. The individual moral nature, however, presupposes significant attainments which can be progressively reached and then continued toward still further attainments. The human spirit is under a moral compulsion to seek perfection, but without adequate opportunity for spiritual attainment, what reasonable purpose can be imagined for bringing forth this soul life at such a cosmic cost, at such a human cost, at the price of such an individual struggle with obstacles and burdens, with weakness and ignorance?

From the point of view of the principle of evolution, death seems naturally to be but an incident in the soul's progressive development of its nature. I once heard John Fiske declare that he believed in the immortality of the soul "not as I accept the demonstrable truths of science but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's world." "Without such a faith we are reduced to permanent intellectual confusion." From the point of view of our moral idealism, we are therefore encouraged to see that there is no essential mystery in death itself; it is in the natural order of life. It is a natural phe-

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nomenon. It is the point where the universe enforces upon us the fact that its purposes for life are beyond our finite comprehension, purposes which we can approach in understanding only through a reasonable faith, based upon the moral implications of our inner life.

Our sorrow should not influence us to see in death other than a perfectly natural phenomenon. Our religious faith should help us to feel that the purposes of the universe are in it.

“Alas for him who never sees  
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!  
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,  
Nor looks to see the breaking day  
Across the mournful marbles play!  
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,  
The truth, to flesh and sense unknown,  
That Life is ever Lord of Death,  
And Love can never lose its own.”<sup>7</sup>

### VII

The inference of the modern Theist, that the spirit of man is immortal by nature, carries with it certain positive and helpful attitudes of mind. The great mass of people who take their religion seriously, come up to Easter every year with profound gratitude and in countless people who pay little attention to their spiritual upkeep day by day, there is a deep stirring of the inner

<sup>7</sup> Whittier's poems, Houghton Mifflin, "Snow Bound," p. 288.

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life. When Easter comes, they feel a definite intimation that it means something profoundly important and they feel moved to come under the spell of it. There is a sense that Easter is somehow involved with the most vital things. And that is why it makes its world-wide human appeal. It seems to reflect profound significance upon our views of life, upon our ideals and aspirations. The mere suggestion that we can give eternal values to these vital things, exerts a profound influence upon all our life estimates.

We may approach the significance of this influence by noting that it involves the issue between long and short views of life, between long and short-time values in the things we most cherish.

Is life over, absolutely over and ended in a few short years—the little child with no chance to develop its spiritual personality, the youth with the evident promise of so much, the mature life with capacities revealed in part, the aged—so wise with experience and yet always looking back upon what might have been if life could only have started with the wisdom of experience—all over and ended though hardly begun no matter what the number of years? If all this is true, then what we call the vital things of life, moral and spiritual principles, aspirations, visions of ideal things, ties of loving affection,

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comradeship, friendship, all that the soul cherishes, all that the mind creates, all have but a short-time value. Repeat that to yourself—all have but a short-time value! They can have for us personally and individually only a temporal and finite significance. There is no possibility of fulfilling them, no possibility of something permanently done for them, or attained in them as a new starting point. After trying a little and failing much, it is all over. Whatever the struggle to do or to be, there is no lasting significance in it. Nothing has been permanently achieved because of it. Consequently, what has it all amounted to?

You may say, however, “think how much humanity has been helped and been made wiser by what you have been able to do or be.” Even so, how pitifully futile it all seems. Even the destiny of humanity on this planet is itself but for a moment. One may speak of the entire life of humanity as but a gleam of time between two eternities. And if the light of its life goes out, how great is the darkness!

If, on the other hand, we are immortal beings, the spiritual principles have a long-time value. Indeed, they have timeless, immortal value. The sanction of the Ultimate Reality is in them. All the spirituality, all the strength and beauty of character which we can build into our personalities have everlasting value, a value eter-

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nally significant for us individually and for humanity. They have a worth which partakes of the Infinite. They are not impersonal events in an impersonal universe, a universe of mere mechanical forces. They are spiritual realities manifesting a Spiritual Reality. If we as spiritual beings are immortal, then the essential elements of our spiritual being, truth and justice, love and service, aspiration and sacrifice, are all worth our utmost reverence and devotion because they have a lasting worth. They are everlastingly significant to us and to humanity and to the universe.

Such is the issue which Easter always brings before us. Let us see how it works out. Jesus lived and died for spiritual principles. Was his life worth its cost? Is any life worth its cost? It is not a question whether or not there has been mathematically more pleasure than pain. It is a question as to whether or not all the efforts necessary to come up to one's ideal of one's self are worth their cost. I think our answer depends more than we realize upon what we might call our eternal-value judgments.

Why should Jesus oppose the views of his time with his own visions of truth? Why should he declare, "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Why should anyone say that? Why should Jesus go up to Jerusalem on the morning that we commemorate as Palm

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Sunday instead of going back to Galilee and saving his life? Why should anyone go up to his own Jerusalem, to any further trial of his courage and faith? Why should Jesus hang from a cross of sacrifice and suffering? Why do we instinctively reverence the self-sacrifice which Jesus actually made? Chiefly because his decisions involved something more than the issues of a moment; only because they involved immortal principles and his own immortal soul. That is, he lived and died as an immortal.

So has it been with all the great souls before him and all the great souls since his day. Socrates differed from the established views of his time. The established order of belief forced upon him the cup of hemlock. But why should he drink it, a man intensely alive, physically, mentally and spiritually? When the decision, involving the integrity of his own soul confronted him, however, he did not hesitate. He forgave his Judges. He talked freely and lovingly with his disciples about life and death. Said he, "Wherefore be of good cheer about death and know of a certainty that no evil can happen to a good man either in life or after death." Thus he talked quietly and calmly with the utmost confidence, and then he drank the hemlock.

Was he a fool? Was he mad? Was it all a vain show? I sometimes wonder what I should

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answer if I were completely convinced that his inner life actually went out, that the life of all humanity goes out in death. How could I feel that the principles for which Socrates sacrificed his life were worth such a sacrifice unless they were everlastingly significant to him and to the world, unless in fulfilling his idea of truth and integrity something permanent had been accomplished, something of universal significance had been attained? As I think of it, I bow in reverence before such sublime heroism because a human spirit has triumphed for the cause of truth. Truth partakes of the Infinite.

Just think what such heroisms involve! At the martyrdom of Servetus, the first Unitarian martyr, what was the issue? There were indeed many issues, political as well as theological, but at the end his trial turned on his heretical teachings. He had confessed his faith in Jesus Christ the son of the Eternal God, not in the Eternal son of the Eternal God. Calvin drew up many charges of heresy from the books of Servetus, as "partly impious blasphemies, partly profane and insane errors, and all wholly foreign to the Word of God and the orthodox faith." Calvin won his case. Servetus was condemned to be burned at the stake in Geneva's suburb of Champel, October 27, 1553. With a prayer on his lips he suffered the martyrdom because his faith involved his spiritual integrity. It was worth the

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sacrifice because it was *eternally* worth it. God's truth had eternal significance to him and to his witness to the truth in the world. It was thus worth his utmost devotion. "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

And thus it has been worth the sacrifice to all martyrs in religion and in science and in all the common life of the world. How sublime they all are! How mighty are their aspirations, provided that these spiritual things, these principles of integrity and truth, have an immortal significance! How impelling these principles are in us, if what we do or fail to do concerns eternal verities!

If, on the other hand, they have but a temporal and finite meaning in beings who are to be snuffed out at death, I wonder—I wonder if we should feel such impelling, if we should indeed struggle and sacrifice for them as we do. Let us quietly think out our own answers to this question. In my experience I see so many people stand up nobly to their duties, bear burdens that weigh heavily upon them, accept limitations upon their life which must be hard to accept, and they say to me modestly, "There was nothing else to do." Yet there were many other things to do. They could have turned away, they could have confined themselves to their own personal interests. They could have said, "No—why

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should I sacrifice myself, why should I submit to less when my life cries out for more? Why should I accept all such curtailments and limitations when my own life needs expansion and enrichment and satisfaction?" These are just the things, however, which are *not* said. Something of transcendent significance seems to be at stake, and the definitely right thing is done.

It is clear, of course, that human values wrought out by age-long human experience continue whether their immortality is true or not. Here we would be at one with the Humanist. Yet I cannot help wondering if after a time they would have the same inspirational power of excellence, such for instance as the courage to bear pain, the strength to surmount some tragic disappointment, the will to sacrifice for the sake of a larger future good; that is, losing the long-time value, the significance of an enduring meaning, and assuming the character of a short-time value ending speedily in nothingness, if something of majestic, compelling, alluring influence, something bidding high for allegiance would not be lost? Would not a real meaning in them suffer such a qualification as to drain them of inspirational power? Professor Harry Overstreet declares very positively that this inspirational power would suffer. "Bravery is, indeed, a fine thing, but one suspects that, for a steady diet, it is not enough. For there can be mean-

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ingless bravery. 'Theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do and die.' We tend to scoff at that nowadays. Why be brave in a stupid cause? Why then be brave in a cosmic cause that is utterly without significance?

"Somehow we want more than bravery; we want *meaning*. Tell us, we seem always to be saying, that these things we do have a meaning that is enduring, and we shall go at them with all the powers of mind and body. Tell us they have no meaning beyond our small human sphere, that indeed nothing has any meaning, that the best we do is only a passing thing that fills a moment which goes nowhere, and we slacken in will." <sup>8</sup>

I myself must wonder what would happen to our ideals if we were actually convinced that human life is not worth immortality, and, therefore, is not immortal; that moral principles are indeed but temporal and finite, meaning nothing to us beyond the span of a few short years. For my part, as I contemplate it, it would indeed mean as John Fiske expressed it, "permanent intellectual confusion." And more than that, it would mean permanent moral confusion. For my part it would mean that both reason and moral idealism have no sanction in the God-established nature of things.

Of course, I am not unmindful of the fact

<sup>8</sup> *Survey*, January, 1931, p. 360.

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that many noble souls do not believe in immortality. Liberal religionists are not inclined to be dogmatic about this matter. It is with them a matter of personal judgment. We all have friends who do not believe in immortality. Their doubt or disbelief does not tempt them to be immoral, selfish, unmindful of duty and sacrifice. Some of them, indeed, confess to me that they wish they might have assurance about immortality; nevertheless they live nobly, lovingly, helpfully. Yet I am persuaded that there is much in the fact that these people have been reared in a human fellowship and environment whose spiritual life has involved a definite belief in immortality and unconsciously their own moral and spiritual ideas have felt the moulding influence of ages of eternal-value judgments. Unconsciously to them, moral principles have had for them a quality, a worth with which an age-long belief in immortality has invested them. Unconsciously to these people, the vital things of the spirit have actually had for them not a temporal but an eternal meaning. Whatever their theoretical point of view, their practical life has carried on the momentum of such a meaning which immortality gives to all truth and goodness and beauty of life.

Yet what if that momentum should stop! Can we imagine the absence of such a meaning for centuries? Can we imagine a world for cen-

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turies convinced that this life is all, that all idealism is but for the moment, and that all moral values are doomed eventually to futility and frustration? It is perhaps impossible to imagine it, but when I try, Easter has disappeared from the picture, the well-springs of the world's finest aspirations have run dry, its ideals have become lifeless. Why strive for the unreal? Why try to attain what cannot be attained? Why strive for nothing? Why even become uncomfortable for a mere fancy? Why give one's life for what has no permanent value? Why work for a future good which has no future? Why worry—about the culture of the soul that hath no preeminence above the beasts? How long would it be before the world had agreed with the Preacher of old: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

You will recall George Eliot's fine aspiration:

"O, may I join the choir invisible  
Of those immortal dead who live again,  
In minds made better by their presence."

Very noble—if the dead are really immortal. Yet if the dead live but in the minds of others then indeed are they dead, because these others and all others, after the world's gleam of time between two eternities, will be dead and gone. Nothing remains. Nothing of permanent value

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has been secured by all the mighty effort of the world. The great heart of man has striven in vain.

“To live in hearts we leave behind”—to pass on a constructive influence long after we have died, fulfills the social moral value of the good life. It is not however an adequate moral consummation of the individual moral struggle. Such an adequate moral consummation must be individual as well as social. I can see no other moral justification for the sublime human endowment and for the moral imperative laid upon it to seek perfection. We cannot conceive any moral consummation in terms of a final goal but only in terms of a continuing spiritual opportunity.

All such protest is the instinctive reaction of the spirit to the possibility of its annihilation. Destruction may indeed be the ultimate fact and the protest may be but a wish-thought. Yet, is its significance not something more than a wish-thought? The fact is, it is a moral reaction, it is a moral protest and has moral meaning. The very fact of such a reaction leads to the inference that a moral nature of things should heed it. The spirit of man is actually expressing the logic of the nature with which he has been endowed. The inference is a natural one, that the universe which has thus endowed man is concerned with the natural expression of that endowment. In

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his moral and spiritual triumphs man has done what the universe has intended he should do when it endowed his nature with spiritual capacities.

### VIII

Think of these things as you go forth on some Easter Sunday morning, and look up to the skies and then inward upon the wonder and mystery of your own inner life. I believe that your soul will expand to match the great mystery of its immortal nature. As to the baffling conception of life eternal, we ought to be intellectually in a comfortable position inasmuch as the idea is no more baffling than the conception of any of the eternities and infinities which confront us on every hand and with which we are familiar at least by experience. On every hand the finite is beset by the infinite. All problems in physics lead straight to metaphysics. We are now so accustomed to such facts that we no longer worry about them. We have discovered both the known and the unknown to be dependable, and we have come to realize that the main thing is this, to find out how the ultimates behave and to adjust ourselves to that behavior. It is all the finite mind can do or needs to do.

There is another thought to keep in mind. Though the life immortal is unthinkable, it is livable. Unthinkable yet livable! That is true

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of all the ultimates of Reality, unthinkable yet livable. We cannot comprehend the life eternal, but we can experience it. That is what we are all doing at this moment. But we are not conscious of anything appalling or awful or depressing. We cannot be conscious of all eternity, but we can be conscious of the passing moment. That means, however, that the life eternal is now. We do not have to die to begin it. It seems to have begun with us individually when certain psychic elements came together and united to form our separate individual personalities. At that point we were "made to be immortal."

Life eternal means what it means now. We are experiencing, moment by moment, an unlimited process of life. For that reason, the conception of the process as unlimited should present no difficulty about which we should need to worry. So long as we can naturally, normally and significantly experience what we cannot comprehend, that is enough.

Sublimely, inspiringly, consolingly, enough! Enough—could we but appreciate the significance of events now going on in the inner lives of human beings. In my own mind is the picture of a young man. A physical sentence of death has been passed upon his body, now, when he has so much to live for, with a mind trained by the best educational advantages, filled

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with splendid hopes and aspirations. And the end is in sight! The end of what? Before I answer, I would say that he is looking straight at the situation, fighting down the disappointment, fighting down the rebellion, mastering everything mightily and cheerfully and faithfully. The end of what? Not the end of him! His life eternal is right now. As did Christ himself, he lives and dies as an immortal.

What time is we do not know. Consequently, what eternity is we do not know. What is at the moment we know in part. What is, at the moment, is our inner life with all its moral and spiritual stress and strain. Can we come to any other just estimate of it and not say "God made man to be immortal," not to be made immortal sometime but now, made to be immortal by nature? Said Epictetus, "Dare to look up to God and say, 'Make use of me for the future as Thou wilt. I am of the same mind; I am one with Thee;'" sublimely true, in the sense that the spirit of man is essentially God-like, made so by nature.

It seems to me that we cannot over-estimate the reaction of a faith in immortality upon our life judgments, our life attitudes, nor can we over-estimate how much such attitudes and judgments depend upon our eternal-value judgments.

What a prophecy of the truth, what a rea-

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sonable basis for faith, is the very fact that we have the capacity to feel the significance of such eternal-value judgments, that we have an idealism which calls for fulfillment, that we have indeed a nature which matches the immortal hope! Here we are, living under a moral imperative impressed upon us by the universe itself, ever to seek the better, to sacrifice for the better, to do anything, give anything in order to be true to our ideal of ourselves. Surely the universe will make something not only sensible but transcendently significant out of its own demand.

Doubt? Of course, we can doubt and we can continue to doubt. Indeed it is possible, if we will, to doubt concerning most of the supreme things of life. There are comparatively few things which we can ever know on the basis of scientific demonstration. Science has actually proved but few of its accepted beliefs. Yet science would be unspeakably foolish if it were to insist upon doubt. Science always feels perfectly free to advance on the basis of faith. If it has a reasonable faith it ignores all doubt and proceeds in faith. It is quite possible to doubt the continuity of nature's processes upon which all science depends. It is quite possible to doubt if there will ever be an earthly tomorrow for our tomorrow's plans and purposes, yet it would not be a reasonable doubt. It is not necessary to

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know all about some principle in order to apply it. Of course it is possible to doubt immortality, but do we have a reasonable and reasoning doubt? If on the other hand, we have a reasonable and a reasoning faith, it is foolish not to walk by such a faith and to ignore the possible doubt. Again I say, look at the life of Jesus and ask yourself if his life was worth its cost. Look at any strong and beautiful and lovable life which you yourself know, and ask yourself if it is worth immortality. If you feel that it is worth it, if you feel that its nature matches the idea and implies the truth of the idea, then by all means be wise; make the most of your faith.

Life has often been referred to as a wonderful adventure and if we are immortal, the adventure continues through the incident of death. Stoford Brooke once said that he expected the day of his death would be the most romantic day of his life. Charles Frohman, facing death on the *Lusitania*, was asked if he feared to die and replied "Why fear death; it is the most beautiful adventure in life."

Said Browning:

"Leave *now* for dogs and apes.  
Man has forever."

Man has "forever" because that is his nature. The things which belong to his spiritual life have immortal significance. John Adams in his

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old age once said to an inquiring friend that he was about ready to leave this world of the dying for the world of the living. This is indeed the world of the dying, there is no doubt about that. Yet if we are immortal, it is likewise the world of the living because we are immortal now. We do not have to wait until we die to become immortal. We are immortal now. The things most dear to us mean just that. That is why we are to serve them now and sacrifice the temporal things to them. There is reason for striving to live and die as immortals, because we are immortal now.

The physical being may begin to decay yet the personality may stand forth the more freely. As Paul said, "Wherefore we faint not; but though the outward man is decaying, the inward man is renewed day by day." It is indeed renewed day by day. Every day we live, the outward man is perishing and wasting away, yet it is not only renewed but the personality goes right on from day to day independently of these physical changes. Death itself becomes but an incident in life, a life in which the joys which are clean and the wisdom which has been won are enrichments forever; a life in which the earthly disappointments and failures are not of lasting or fatal importance; a life whose sorrows are indeed but for a moment, and whose unlimited spiritual capacities are destined for still

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further activity and development. If we are immortal, it is a privilege to have lived, and the sky within the soul is bright with the light of confidence. Browning sums it all up in a great vision :

“If I stoop  
Into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud,  
It is but for a moment ; I press God’s lamp  
Close to my breast ; its splendor soon or late  
Will pierce the gloom ; I shall emerge one day !”

### IX

To the modern Theist there is no final answer at hand to the great mysteries. Why the whole universe-system has somehow started only, perhaps, to run down ; why there are all these vast masses of gas and dirt, innumerable millions of them ; why our own planetary system is the only one yet discovered in which one world, our own, has provided conditions favorable for the spiritual life as we know it ; why the evolution of life itself, up to man, has been one apparently of the trial and error method, with apparent stupidities of nature which are incredible ; why our human bodies are such appalling victims of such stupidities ; why we must win our own way, attain our own knowledge, gain our own moral understanding and strength ; why so much evil and suffering ; why nature is so unmindful of us

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at times when we suffer and when we are in danger; why our bodily craft is so liable to breakdown and disaster—we do not know. These mysteries involve infinities. They emerge from a cosmic background; they appear in a cosmic process. That does not mean, however, that there is no answer simply because our finite minds cannot discover one which is thoroughly satisfactory. Modern theism is not to be discredited because its ultimates are beyond us. The scientist is in the dark with regard to his own ultimates, and the philosopher is only able to make good guesses. Professor Karapetoff, of Cornell University, has recently said that, "electricity is not anything that can be described in terms of anything that we know anything about." Jeans leads us through the stellar spaces and through the atomic spaces from one astonishment to another, but as to the meaning of life and to the ultimate meaning of the universe, he throws up his hands. He refers to the growing realization that the ultimate realities are at the present time beyond the reach of science, and may be forever beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

The modern Theist is, therefore, not disturbed when people complain that modern religion has lost some of the old certainties. It has indeed lost some of them, but it has gained others. In place of mere traditions, it has discovered truths,

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actualities, and reasons to believe. On such discoveries as science has made, and on such interpretations as philosophers have likewise made, we, the people, have to do the best we can. Where doctors disagree it is not folly to be wise. It is folly not to be as wise as we can be. The injunction of the ancient sage is still a challenge, "Get wisdom, get understanding." It is a mind-and-soul-absorbing business, but more than we can begin to realize, our peace of mind, our courage, hopes and faiths, depend upon what seems to be reasonable to us and upon what seems to be a reasonable attitude toward the great mysteries.

We are a part of a cosmic process, with finite experience and finite understanding. We simply know that the Cosmos has brought us forth, that increasing knowledge is possible, that we can discipline ourselves spiritually to resist temptation, to rise above our trials and to help our brother to rise above his trials. We look with reverence upon the human souls who show us the way, and who impress upon us that the triumph of the human spirit, for its own sake and for the sake of others, is worth all its cost. They appear upon a lofty summit of human development. They seem to rest upon the peak of spiritual evolution. There they are, the apex of the whole process! Why had they to climb with such appalling efforts? Tennyson, con-

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cluding his poem to "The Evolutionist," gives us a sublime picture:

"At last I heard a voice upon the slope  
Cry to the summit, 'Is there any hope?'  
To which an answer peal'd from that high land,  
But in a tongue no man could understand;  
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn  
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn."

We look upon the great mysteries and from them we turn to the souls who have triumphed in spite of them. Christ upon the cross! All Christ-like souls upon their crosses! The Christ-spirits bearing the crosses of others! Noble and lovable men and women! Then we look back upon the mysteries and find that upon the upper edges of them, "God made Himself an awful rose of dawn"—not awful in the sense of horror and dread, but of awesomeness and sublimity.

In spite of mystery, in spite of suffering and sacrifice and tragic cost, something of transcendent significance is being worked out in the spiritual life of man which could not apparently be worked out in any other way. The glory of triumphant souls is so transcendently sublime that the whole cosmic process seems no more than a fitting preparation for it. The size and the complexities of the universe-processes appear to have little significance except in their relation to the spiritual life of man on this mere speck

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of a planet. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick recently quoted a cynical statement to the effect that, "Astronomically speaking, man is but an insignificant speck." To which the retort was made, "Astronomically speaking, man is the astronomer!" That answer suggests the true comparison. If the conception of infinity is important to the human spirit, as a symbol perhaps of an immortal destiny, the physical universe is admirably adapted to that end. Such an interpretation of it gives the universe a significance which otherwise appears to be lacking.

## V

### A MODERN THEISM AND THE DIVINE COMPASSION

#### I

**F**ROM any point of view, love is the supreme mystery of all creation. Mysteries confront us on every hand, the mysteries of pain, evil, death. They all lay their heavy burdens upon the human spirit. Life itself we have said is the birth of mystery. The whole universal nature of things is a mystery. Love, however, is a mystery beyond all others. Itself a mystery, it yet gives the greatest strength with which to bear the burden of pain, its light triumphs over the darkness of evil, penetrating even the mystery of death with hope and faith. Nothing in the material universe, though infinite in size, compares with love's mysterious significance. With its light and its power, its unfathomable depths and lofty heights, it is the supreme mystery and at the same time, the supreme revealer of the noblest truth in other mysteries.

How can we lift a discussion of love above

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what is hackneyed and sentimental, above what is bromidic and platitudinous? We can try to do so by first regarding it as a fact of creation. Here it is, a fact. What of it?

The significance of love as a revealing fact has come to have immense importance to the modern Theist. Love was in the world before man. The lower orders of life display the rudiments of love, but in man it has had a marvelous and beautiful development. It has created the human family and human society, and has inspired the vision of human brotherhood.

It is impressive to look back and to see the human spirit, out of its own idealizing capacities, creating even a thought of God as a God of love. The thought came to the great prophets Hosea and Isaiah. It was supreme in the mind and heart of Jesus, and in some of his disciples. Others have lost it, keeping it only in formal and empty words.

Job lifted the human cry centuries ago: "O, that I knew where I might find him!" Many a human heart today is crying out, "O, that I knew that there is Someone who cares!" To find an answer to these cries of the human heart, the most familiar and unquestioned beliefs are being put on trial. Indeed, the universe itself is frankly put on trial. The human mind is looking straight at Reality to see what it actually has to say for itself. It is a tremendous thing when

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the human mind feels free to do that. The traditionalist may scorn it as impudence, but it is not impudence. It is probably the divinest thing we do. It is the soul's search for the most vital truth. It is the soul's instinctive response to the law of growth. If you aspire to grow, you must seek and find, and that is what the mind is for, to search for truth.

In this modern world human minds and hearts have felt as never before the grip of a vast material universe. This feeling is the stronger because we now know more about that aspect of Reality. Such an aspect of Great Nature is overwhelming. Mechanical forces are universally at work operating according to law and operating absolutely and relentlessly so far as we are concerned. They give us life and they take it away. We seem to control them only when we obey them.

"Streams do not curb their pride  
The just man not to entomb;  
Nor lightnings turn aside,  
To give his virtues room."

It is amazing how often people are tempted to ignore such aspects of the nature of things when they attempt to create for themselves a religious philosophy of life. It is not so easy, however, to turn away from them when we are ourselves victims, victims of pain, of evil, of death's

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dark designs against ourselves and our well beloved—victims of nature's law, victims of nature's forces, victims of Great Nature, universal, impersonal, unescapable. We could go on and on and point out how often we are victims, but eventually we should have to pause, because *love has entered upon the scene*—love, with all its wondrous mystery. Here it is, a fact, in this vast machine of Great Nature.

Let us think what we mean by it. We mean the spontaneous attraction of congenial souls; we mean the bond of close and intimate companionship through the years, the ties of friendship, the marriage ties of loving affection, the dearest things we know. We mean the passion of youth. Said Emerson, "The passion remakes the world for youth. It makes all things alive and significant." We mean the good will which may exist outside the spontaneous affection, the good will that wills what is good and just, the passion for human good and human service, the will to be kind, helpful, sympathetic. We mean the most constructive force in all human relationships. All such out-go, such going out of the human heart, are what we mean by love. It is supreme spirituality.

How did it get here? Someone tells me that it got here through sex and the social instincts, and I reply that that merely indicates the road over which it came or the door through which

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it appeared. I am not told whence it came nor how it emerged upon the road or arrived at the door. It is here with spiritual characteristics and qualities. It is here with standards of value, the like of which are not to be found elsewhere in all Great Nature. Human nature involves something different from mechanical nature or from what we assume mechanical nature to be.

The human mind is itself a mystery in this machine universe, but the moral and spiritual nature of man in its noblest expression—perfect love—is the supreme mystery. Mysterious is it in its essential nature. Think of its paradoxes! For instance, love adds a new and strange power to the animal “will to live,” to the instinct for self-preservation. Love perceives a larger life with some other or a life in a community with others. It will attain that larger life. But the time may come when one must sacrifice the lesser life for the larger, the individual self for the good of some other or for the good of the community. Here is a sublime mystery because Great Nature has itself been trying for unnumbered years to make the individual self strong and dominant, to which all else must be sacrificed. Love, however, will give itself.

Whence came this mysterious fact? Not out of nothing. Common sense forbids us to say that it came out of nothing, that it is just here. The point is that on a tiny bit of the material

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universe there is something from somewhere, a human nature in the midst of Great Nature, love in the midst of mechanical forces—the forces of gravitation, electricity, magnetism, the forces of attraction, the forces of repulsion. Love, however, is another kind of force, a spiritual force. We know it from experience. Human nature has the capacity to love. It is the supreme expression of the moral and spiritual nature of man. Hence it must have in Reality some adequate cause, a Source akin to love to account for it.

### II

It has been a great help in the religious philosophy of a modern Theist to have the testimony of science to the effect that in its search for fundamental Reality, it has come to the point where its conclusion can best be represented by mathematical symbols, that is, by terms of thought, the thought of a Thinker. This testimony is profoundly significant in view of the question so frequently raised by those who have been overwhelmed by the mechanical aspect of Great Nature. They have asked, "Where in the nature of things can we find evidence of intelligence apart from human brains?" The answer seems to be that the universe itself is such evidence.

A still more searching question, however, is

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raised, "Where in the nature of things do you discover any benevolence?" The evident implication in the question is that if you cannot find benevolence in the things of nature, it does not exist. When a modern Theist confronts the question, he begins his answer with another question, "Where would you expect to find benevolence? Would you sweep the heavens to find it or analyze the atom to find it?" He would hasten his own answer by saying that he himself would look for benevolence not in things physical but in things spiritual, and where are they? In human beings. The modern Theist believes that the significance of that answer is supreme. The moral and spiritual nature of man is an expression of Reality. Humanity tells something about the fundamental nature of Reality quite as definitely and truly as does the atom or the starry heavens, as time or space, or as any other aspect of the nature of things. The nature of the inner life of man refers itself to a kindredness in the universe out of which it came and in which it is a part. This is a conclusion of primary importance. As I have said, I have never found it successfully controverted. The Universe Thinker that thinks the universe, thinks the human spirit, thinks its life and destiny, thinks the satisfaction of its needs, thinks the laws of its spiritual being, else it could not live. The implications of the moral and spir-

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itual nature of man must refer themselves to a kindred reality out of which it came.

If the fundamental structure of the universe can best be expressed in terms of pure thought, the thoughts of the Universe Thinker appear to be will thoughts. They bring something to pass, and bringing something to pass is evidence of what we call will. When we turn to the spiritual structure of man, to the implications of his nature, to the spiritual laws of his spiritual life, to the significance of his capacities for conscience, for moral judgment, for spiritual values—nothing seems to be plainer nor more necessary than the inference that the Universe Will is in us a moral will seeking to bring something spiritual to pass in our human world and through our human co-operation.

We are brought then to a simple, natural, common sense conclusion of profound meaning and we ought to make the most of it, both by reason which cannot go very far and by a logical imagination which may go very much farther. It has been the sublime powers of mathematical imagination which have enabled modern physicists to penetrate so deeply into the structure of the universe and find it to be a structure of thought, and it should be through the utmost stretches of spiritual imagination that we vision the spiritual nature of the Universe Thinker.

Eddington declares that while as a scientist

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he uses the words "Personal God" very reluctantly because of the ancient connotations attached to them, yet "it is, I think, of the very essence of the unseen world that the conception of personality should dominate it."<sup>1</sup> That is, we should approach Spiritual Reality by the use of symbols from our own personalities, symbols such as intelligence and human will, elements of personality, elements which need not be restricted to a being limited in space by form and outline, but attributed to a Presence universally immanent, as gravitation is immanent, as all the thoughts of the Universe Thinker must themselves be immanent. These thoughts are repeated here for emphasis. To apprehend them in due measure we should stretch our imaginations to the utmost and thus vision a conception of God in the divinest terms we can think. If our visions are incalculably below reality, we can be still further inspired and comforted by our ideals such as they are. We can at least vision the Great Spirit as the supreme of an all-inclusive and comprehending Spirituality, the utmost of lovingness and moral excellence.

How can a modern Theist retain any conception of a divine compassion? By following through the implications of our spiritual nature, by inferring a kindredness in that Reality from

<sup>1</sup> Eddington, *Science and the Unseen World*, p. 82, Macmillan Co.

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which we came, by using the symbols of our own spiritual life, intelligence and moral will, the spiritual values of truth, goodness and beauty, love, sympathy and solicitude, symbols which we can but faintly apply to the Infinite but through which we can approach the Infinite with confidence and understanding. As we feel the obligations of the moral law, we can sense the presence of the Lawgiver. As we feel the implications of our spiritual life, we can feel the presence of the Great Spirit toward which our aspirations and needs ascend. As we feel profound needs for a sympathetic understanding of the great trials of our life, we can sense the presence of a Divine Compassion which cares infinitely beyond any solicitude with which we are familiar.

Where do we find our standards for such idealism? In the supreme expressions of human spirituality, supremely in Christ and all Christ-like souls. An ideal is portrayed in the Gospels. Jesus showed supreme insight into the truths of the spirit. He showed it in what he was and in what he thought. He could teach because he lived what he taught. He knew because of what he was, and from what he was, we draw a profound inference. From his spirit we infer the nature of the Great Spirit. In the familiar phrase, "God must be as good as Jesus, as good as all Christ-like souls." From them

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all we infer the kindredness of the Universe Thinker. To Jesus, God was Father, and following his thought, God is our Father, again a word which can be used only as a symbol, yet true and comforting, a standard for our own idealism. If one hesitates to use the word "Father" as he might, indeed, hesitate to use the word "Personal God," he might think of Fatherliness, Motherliness, Lovingness, attributes of Spirituality, qualities of Infinite Being. Many people in this modern world have gone through this difficulty with words, and now when they speak of God as Father, they think of the inner Presence as that of Fatherliness.

Mr. Beecher once told of a great spiritual experience. When walking in the woods, it suddenly came to him that he need not believe anything about God which did not harmonize with the teachings of Jesus, and at once the weight of the old theology was lifted from his spirit. Jesus, sensitive to the bitterness of the human lot, was yet sensitive to the highest truths of the spirit which he believed to be the lovingness of God. Much in life is hard and dark, but Jesus felt the kind of spirit which is with us in the hardness and in the darkness, even the darkness of evil. Jesus proclaimed the Divine Love always tugging at our heart-strings until we come to ourselves, and start back for the Father's house.

A modern theism in its philosophy of the Di-

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vine Compassion would not attempt to add very much to the implications in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The Parable emphasizes but one point, the Fatherliness of God the Father. Jesus declared that it is constant. Today we interpret the parable in terms of spiritual law. If we sin, we reap as we have sinned, but when we come to ourselves, we strive to regain the better self, we work back to it, live back to it, atone back to it. We make good as far as we can, live rightly, truly, lovingly, and we get results in new life. Scars are gradually healed and covered by new life. That is saying a good deal in a few words but the principle is there. And the testimony of things spiritual is there, the standard for our highest idealism is there. Where do we discover Benevolence in the nature of things? We infer it from the noblest expressions in human benevolence. We look from them to the Source. They reveal something of the Source. We feel its presence in exalted human spirituality. The divine sympathy can be no less. It must be infinitely more but always akin to human love and sympathy as far and as fast as we grow in such spirituality.

### III

Divine Compassion—the mechanist and humanist have ruled it out; a modern theism is

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endeavoring to bring it back. It is something which cannot be scientifically proved. It can however be inferred by one to whom the data is satisfactory. The aim of a modern Theist is to make that data satisfactory by stating the evidential value of the facts and implications of our spiritual being. Without such satisfactions, the philosophy of religion will be cold just where the human spirit needs warmth. It will provide no resource for the deepest needs of the inner life, needs which are inevitably expressive of our spiritual nature and which therefore look justly to Reality for satisfaction.

Compassion—"a profound sympathy," says the dictionary, "a deep tenderness for another in suffering." Modern theism has reason to infer that there is a divine sympathy in the heart of the Universe Thinker for our suffering, a deep tenderness for our sorrows and bereavements, for our human struggle and strivings for that which is ever above and beyond us. The Great Spirit must be a spirit of love, and a real love must be compassionate.

A modern Theist does not hesitate to say "must." He does not hesitate to say that moral imperatives are not simply upon human souls but that they are likewise upon the Great Soul. It may be said reverently but positively. The human race did not ask to come here. A cosmic urge has brought it forth. It may be argued

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that on the whole and for the vast majority of human beings, the good and blessedness of living far overtop the pain. Humanity is evolving from the unmoral animal nature to a spiritual goal exalted beyond our powers of thought. Yet we all know people whose sufferings and pain pass all bounds of what can be humanly conceived as justified. They cry to heaven a vast condemnation of the scheme of things, unless there be in that scheme of things a divine understanding sympathy, a compassion, a divinely endearing tenderness, while suffering humanity is trying to discover the way and the truth, trying to gather the strength and the courage to take the way and to live the truth.

Moreover, there are "sick souls"—what about them? The world has been too much for them—who is to blame? They have gone wrong—who knows the reason? The moral responsibility for the sin—who knows where it lies? How pitiful is the "sick soul" with its sense of failure and of self-reproach, of hopelessness and of frustration, and it may be of utter despair! How pitiful is its need for sympathetic understanding, for some "endearing tenderness" to hold to and to be held by, that hope, strength, high purpose may revive and recovery set in! The needs of the "sick soul"—are they to be ignored by the universe? Are these personalities to be allowed to drift into the discard? It

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seems inhuman to think so. No matter how far down a man gets, elements of the divine are still there. In the "sick soul," is there not something divine in the very sense of spiritual misery and of self-contempt, and if so, does it not put a moral imperative upon the universe to cherish it tenderly, not only because of its suffering, its miserable condition, but because divine qualities which are there, deserve to be recovered? If our human judgments raise such questions, can the answer of the universe be on any plane lower than the human? Not if it possess moral attributes, though "far superior to our own."

"Strong son of God, immortal love," said Tennyson. In that noble statement Tennyson revealed himself not only as a poet but as a philosopher. "Love, child of God!" "Love, life with God!" All the love that we actually know by objective experience is human love; what we know as Divine Love is a subjective experience of faith, based upon our human experience. If the faith is ever so small, yet if it be well grounded, we feel encouraged to do what we do with all other matters of faith,—believe and act in the light of it. If our inference is just we ought to go through with it.

People who are well and well-to-do have less difficulty in acquiring robust faiths, but they who are not well nor well-to-do, and who in

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their secret hearts can just manage to hold on to some courage and faith, are glad to have any definite intimations that there is a Divine Source, One who knows and cares what is happening to them. Human love itself always challenges us to see that it is the medium above all others through which the Divine Source is saying something of itself, and something about all the mysteries of life. Human love says something which philosophers cannot seem to say except in formal words. Every day we are confirming or undermining the faiths and hopes of others by loving or loveless deeds. As Emerson put it:

“Nor knowest thou what argument  
Thy life to thy neighbor’s creed hath lent.”

There is no other such medium for the divine as what we do in love. A sufferer said to me once, “I feel that God is good because you have come to me.”

Love shows that there is understanding and sympathy. It is said that Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, when starting his school for the blind in Boston, realized that if he would help the blind, he must be able to put himself in their place. He tied a bandage over his eyes, wearing it for some time each day, “so that he might realize a little of what it meant to be blind.” It was such understanding and sympathy that enabled

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Thomas Mott Osborne to become a real reformer of criminals and of prison methods. He tried to put himself in the place of the criminal in prison. It can never be done except in part, but he tried to understand in part. And through that understanding he became a revealer of new ways and methods of prison administration.

The indifference of society to such matters seems at times to be as heartless as the forces of the tides. There are so many of us who keep out of sight and out of hearing of such things. Only the heroic few hear "the low, sad music of humanity," and they are almost superhuman in their efforts to alleviate suffering and in their capacity to reveal to the unfortunates that there actually are for them an active sympathy and understanding. Such efforts help further to reveal the fact that in the heart of God there is also sympathy and understanding.

What a picture of divine compassion Dickens draws in *David Copperfield*, a companion parable of the Prodigal Son. One might think of it as the Parable of the Prodigal Daughter. The erring Emily has wandered away and all but the old uncle have cast her off in scorn. But the old man resolves to search the world over until he finds and retrieves the child. Whenever he is away, he insists upon leaving the old house as she knew it. He says, "I wouldn't have the old place seem to cast her off—you understand—but

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seem to tempt her to draw nigher to it and peek in, may be, like a ghost, out of the wind and rain, through the window at the old seat by the fire. Then may be, she might take heart to creep in trembling and might come to be laid in her old bed and rest her weary head where it was once so gay. Every night, as regular as the night comes, the candle must be stood behind the old pane of glass, that if ever she should see it, it may seem to say, 'Come back, my child, come back.' "

Love shows that such understanding and sympathy may survive a disappointment and carry a message of hope. I recall the confession of a brilliant but unstable character who told of his arrest, of being led by two policemen through a jeering crowd and yet in the very extreme of his shame and degradation, a friend took off his hat to him and in reverence bowed before his sorrow. And he wrote, "A man has gone to heaven for less than that." How true that is! If we could only see how a fellow human being might be restrained from utter despair by a sincere display of kindness! Reliance on the justice and pity of mankind is not only a consolation for the unfortunates but an encouragement to think and hope beyond mankind. If you yourself feel the hand of the Universe hard upon you, look for love where you can find it, and having found it, look beyond it. If on the other

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hand you doubt what glory to give your life, give it this, and if you are giving this, your doubts will no longer trouble you.

Love shows that it has the power never to give up hope. I remember hearing of an old man in a Yorkshire village whose son had been a sore grief to him. A neighbor inquired how the son was getting on. "Oh, very bad," was the answer. "He has been drinking again and behaving very rough." "Well, well," said the neighbor, "if he were my son I would turn him out!" "Yes," said the father, "and so might I if he were yours. But you see, he is not yours, he is mine." Such human love is our highest symbol for divine love.

Love shows that it has the power to go even beyond the sense of duty. I remember my profound admiration when I saw, month after month and year after year, the loving care and solicitude of a daughter for her mother. The mother was terribly ill. It is impossible to appreciate how trying, how burdensome, was the care of this mother. It involved services that were exacting, repelling, continuous, hard beyond words, month after month and year after year. I often wondered how the daughter could go on with it, yet I knew the answer in terms of a phrase which so often will explain such mysteries: "Duty will sometimes falter, but love goes all the way." The sense of duty is not often

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strong enough to carry through, but "love goes all the way."

Remember, then, that when you are hard and unloving, you may be prophets of darkness and despair. Remember, too, that what you do in love and sympathy will do more for another's faith in God and man than will any other conceivable thing. The inspirations of the well and the well-to-do are many and noble, but the inspirations of those who are not well nor well-to-do can be just these humble revelations of the Divine in the human.

If you can think now where a little more love might do a little more good, thank God that you have thought of it before it is too late.

The very fact of love implies a Divine Source, and through the love the Divine Source is saying something that cannot be said and is not said in any other way. Consequently, love becomes the key of life, the master-key to all its mysteries.

Chief Officer Manning, who made the heroic rescue of the crew of the ill-fated "Florida," said an astonishing thing when he told the story over the radio. He spoke simply and vividly of how the rescue was actually brought to pass and at the end he said, "They helped us and we helped them, and so we solved the riddle of life." What a remarkable statement—prophetic, revealing! How could it ever have occurred to him? Only

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from the fact that he was not only a heroic man but a profound philosopher. Think what it meant! The danger of that terrible sea was confronted by deep human emotions of fraternal anxiety and by a passion to save even at the possible sacrifice of life itself. When the rescue boat approached the all but submerged ship, bonds of brotherhood bound all these men into one human effort to do together what needed to be done, they in the ship—they in the rescue boat. "They helped us and we helped them, and so we solved the riddle of life."

Love solves the riddles of life, of pain, of evil, of death, of the great universal structure. The mysteries in them all remain because they are all beyond our finite comprehension, but love carries the human heart through them all, bearing the burdens, illuminating the shadows, bringing about rescue, knowing that what is seen is temporal and that what is unseen is eternal. Love stands by with the master key. As someone has said, "Without love no man ever yet found the door of the Kingdom of Heaven, nor ever will."

It is safe to say that we can all love a little more, and then our proclamation about the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man will be void of hypocrisy and deceit. These great principles will then be sincere and effective manifestations of our highest life. A man

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with millions of money and no friends is a failure. The riches of life are in the heart. And if such riches are lost or neglected, nothing can give happiness.

“Strong son of God, Immortal Love!” With it we are indeed sons and daughters of God and the door opens into life’s best things. We cannot break into these things. Jesus had the master key and all Christ-like souls have the master key. You and I may have it. “He that loveth abideth in God and God in him.”

There is an Eastern legend which declares that the gate of heaven is so narrow that one man walking alone cannot pass through; two men walking side by side, one of whom is helping the other, find easy entrance; and when ten men come, all serving one another in love, they find the gate so wide that they see no post on either side.

## VI

### A MODERN THEISM AND CERTAIN DIFFICULTIES IN THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION

#### I

IT IS immensely difficult to adjust the practice of religion to the modern philosophy of religion. The framework provided by the new conception of the universe is colossal beyond all comprehension by the human mind. Its actual and incredible vastness is now known in terms of millions of light-years. To the farthest known limits it is intelligible, the manifestation of intelligence and of the administration of a Cosmic Thinker. But this known vastness is oppressive. It will have to be counteracted as far as possible by turning the imagination in the other direction, toward the infinitesimal, and by endeavoring to realize to the utmost the implications that are involved in the analysis of the atom. We must try to appreciate the significance of the actual presence of the Cosmic Thinker in the administration of the atomic structure even of our brain cells and heart beats. It is exceedingly difficult not to be dominated by a sense of

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the remoteness of the Cosmic Thinker, yet we must try to the utmost to make remoteness secondary to immanence. The thought must be continually repeated that the Universe Spirit is not so remote from the human spirit as to have no interest in it, nor so remote in fact that we can have no concern in making contact with it.

Furthermore, we must give all possible reality to the spiritual kindredness of the Great Spirit. When we give wings to our imagination and try to vision the moral and spiritual excellence of the Most High Ideal, we must do our utmost to realize that our imaginations are proceeding not away from but toward what is actually real, vital, spiritual, ideal beyond all that we can vision but not beyond our immediate and inner experience. The Infinite Ideal Presence is not remote but an intimate presence within our inmost thought and deepest feelings.

To state these great beliefs as clearly and simply as possible to ourselves is a help, and yet, for a long time the world will find difficulty in practicing them. A modern Theist knows how difficult is the practice of the modern thought of God—yet religion is something that must be practiced. Theology is the systematic arrangement of our human thoughts of God. A modern theology is thus indispensable to a modern religion, but religion is the daily and hourly practice of what we believe and even with the

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clearest of beliefs such practice is difficult, when the beliefs have become so different from those of tradition.

For instance, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God." How can it be done? How is it possible to love the God of our present day thought? We still feel the exalted simplicity of the two great spiritual principles upon which Jesus placed his supreme emphasis. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbor as thyself." As a matter of fact, however, the old simplicity is gone. How can we love an Infinite Being? It seems fantastic even to suggest it.

We can see that in the past such love presented no difficulties. In the religion of ancient Israel, love did not mean the heart's affections; it meant loyalty. "Thou shalt have no other Gods but me," is the first of the ten commandments. The truth is that the Gods of the ancient world were not lovable. Only in the later and greater spiritual geniuses of Israel was there any indication of the response of the heart. Moreover, while God was great beyond the possibility of comprehension, a thought nobly brought out in the Book of Job, still it was not so much the vastness of being as the vastness of power and of wisdom. God himself was a larger man with his own special dwelling-place. This was the thought of God in the time of Jesus. With his profound spiritual insight, however,

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Jesus thought of God as the Father of all his earthly children. He vitalized the great commandments with a heart response. The author of the Epistle of John was another soul of great spiritual insight. "God is love and he that loveth abideth in God and God in him." Only the man who loves his fellowmen can love God, and the writer meant actual love for God.

In his book on *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Professor James tells a number of most interesting cases of mystical love for God. Even today the mass of people still think of God as a larger man. I think it was Matthew Arnold who declared that the thought of God in the mind of the average Englishman of his day was that of an immeasurable English clergyman in a white tie. From the point of view of the traditional thought, God was not so remote that he could not be reached with a loving spirit. To love God has been accepted as a religious duty and people have thought that they were fulfilling it in their religious practices. Many a great soul has literally succeeded. To those, however, whose thoughts have been influenced and moulded by the modern revelations of science, the God of our fathers seems lost in mere immensity.

Two common mistakes have enlarged the difficulty. We are naturally tempted to exaggerate the significance of mere bigness, and again,

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we are likely to lose the God of Spirit in the conception of Infinite Force. We have to recall our own minds repeatedly to the fact that size is of no special difficulty, particularly if we hold to the thought of the immanence of the Infinite. Moreover, Infinite Personality is no more difficult to conceive than Infinite Force. We have always to keep in mind that with Infinite Personality we have to do not with the form and outline somewhere of a Larger-Man-God but with the cosmic attributes of intelligence and moral will, of spirituality in the Most High Ideal of Being, of the immanence of this Spirituality. We have always to keep in mind that we are moral and spiritual beings in a moral and spiritual order, that we live and move and have our being in this Infinite Spirituality. To keep in mind such conceptions is to carry on the adjustment of our religion to modern points of view. Yet do they help us "to love the Lord our God"?

### II

Religion must be a matter of experience and experience sometimes clarifies our thought. Suppose we think for a moment from the point of view of a child. A child was once gazing up at the night sky of clear stars and said, "Mother, I know what makes it so. God gets above it and shines through." Let us put that thought before

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the world and say, "Contradict it if you can!" "God gets above it and shines through!" The essential thought here is unassailable. Recall this thought when you can be quiet and can apply it to the vital experiences of your life and of the world, and see how it works.

We are all children before the Infinite. We extend our measurements as we grow up, and so does the world as it grows up. Yet if any of us becomes afflicted with intellectual conceit, as his measurements enlarge, he needs greatly to be reminded that he is still a child. Sir Isaac Newton confessed that he felt like a child picking up pebbles on the shore of an infinite sea. So, then, as children, let us start with the insight of the child: "God gets above it and shines through."

Someone has said, "Love consists in the fellowship of kindred spirits." Let us try to get close to the suggestion implied in fellowship, in the fellowship of kindred spirits drawing together with the sense of kindredness. In our human relations we are drawn to the object of our love, the seen object that is lovable; fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters and friends, wives and husbands and children. We see them and we love them. In our religion we feel drawn toward the Unseen Ideal, toward the kindredness of the Unseen, toward the lovable ideal of the Unseen visioned in our minds. Yet how

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different that is, we say at once, from the response we make to one another as human beings; and, of course, it is different, yet not so utterly unlike as we may think.

The truth is that in our human relations the loved one is not actually seen. He is known only as manifested in the outward life. We love the unseen person as expressed in lovableness. We really love the impression made upon us by the unseen person. In our religion also we are drawn toward the Unseen according to the impression which is made upon us. We are awed and uplifted by the wonders of nature. We feel that God is back of what we call nature and shines through. Then, as we have indicated, there is in human nature a higher expression of the Unseen. God is back of human nature and shines through, back of Jesus, back of the saints and martyrs of the world, back of the people we ourselves love. He shines through them all because the nature of them all has emerged from Reality. Whatever is of love and of truth, of goodness and of beauty, is of Godness. It is of the divine life in this moral order. Whatever is of hate or of falsehood, of evil and of ugliness, is out of harmony with the moral order and God shines through the penalties involved in the breaking of the moral order. Whatever is undivine is of undeveloped persons. Whatever is divine is of developed persons, growing up into

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whatsoever is of truth and love, of goodness and of beauty. And in all our experience with the true and with the loving, with what is good and with what is beautiful, we feel drawn toward the Supreme which we feel to be shining through such experiences. Scholars and philosophers in quest of truth, average men, women and children in all fellowships of affection, of service and of duty, all have their moments of response to the Unseen. The conception of the Unseen is moulded by these experiences, and in such conceptions there is something of "the fellowship of kindred spirits," deep answering unto deep. We do not then think of the bigness of the Unseen but of the character of the Unseen. And does it not seem conceivable for the human spirit to feel moved by a deep emotional response? "I love thee, O Lord, my strength, and all things and all persons which manifest thy spirit."

Here is a matter of spiritual discipline. We cannot love anything to order, human or divine. We have to practice, and practice leads to attainment. Jesus loved and, therefore, knew—for there is more than one avenue to the truth. There is a vast mistake being made in this modern world in the assumption that the intellect is the only avenue to truth. We find out what we can with the intellect, and then we must bring in the heart. Said the ancient prophet, "Ye shall seek me and ye shall find me when ye shall search

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for me with all your heart." We must search for God with the heart, and that search must be carried on in our daily life. The apostle cried out, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen," but the reverse is even more evident. He who loves his brother is the more likely to love God. Men sometimes use their minds and then stop. Men indulge in self-seeking and then stop. Love is the key which opens the deeps both of the finite and of the Infinite. Said Goethe, "We learn nothing but what we love," and so our souls halt and hesitate before the Infinite because in our life from day to day our love is weak.

One who lives the loving life is the better able to create an ideal of the Unseen that is a lovable ideal. Jesus had a vision of such an ideal, the church has talked about it, but has seldom meant what it said. The loving life rises naturally to this ideal. And it becomes a refuge and strength in our moments of weakness and misgiving.

It cannot be too clearly understood that such an ideal is a matter of discipline and development, of education and of spiritual insight. People differ tremendously in temperament, in native spiritual endowment. Moreover, we all have the natural timidities and misgivings of finite beings in the presence of the Infinites. We are occupied with distractions on the one hand

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and with the necessities of life on the other. Many people never think of putting themselves, with any kind of regularity, under influences which call their spiritual natures into activity. Few are they who venture far into the deeps of their own spiritual nature, nor far into the great problems of the world. The great souls of humanity, however, encourage us, and our own high moments of communion and of conviction may now and then establish strong foundations of spiritual confidence and a real sense of fellowship with a Kindred Spirit.

### III

A modern Theist would urge that the inspirations from the thought of God are not necessarily lost to us simply because we have such overwhelming impressions of infinity. We must continue to try to realize that bigness is no insuperable difficulty in a fellowship of kindred spirits. Responding to ideals created by the world's noblest and highest expressions of spirituality, we may approach the Unseen both within our souls and without, as the Great Soul. We may feel a genuine drawing toward this Infinite with an emotion, call it what you will, of trust and confidence, of hope and security and gratitude, all akin to love.

If we still hesitate to define such an emotion

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in terms of love, if the vagueness of our thoughts and feelings constitutes too great an obstacle, I would say two things. In the first place, do not pretend to attempt the impossible but think and feel, and continue to think and to feel every day, every year, toward the Most High Ideal of Being; and continue to try in your idealizations to get somewhere in appreciation of the spiritual significance of the relationship. The Unseen confronts us at every point and always will, and we cannot always draw back and think of something else. At times, it insists that we face it. Try to meet it, then, with thoughts as exalted and as nobly sincere as you can. And remember—no practice, no results.

In the second place, I would have you keep in mind the confession of Charles Sumner. He once said something to the effect that while he could not understand how he could possibly carry out the first commandment, he tried all his life to obey the second; to love his neighbor as himself.

How can we love the Infinite? It may be that we cannot. We may not know how we can possibly say, "I love thee, O Lord, my strength." Yet we can love the words, the acts, the lives which display what we call the divine. Here is an attitude of mind which I feel must be satisfying to God himself who is not in this respect, the jealous God of former times.

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The second commandment we can keep with sincerity and clearness. We can love the good, we can serve others, we can aspire to be of help, we can commit ourselves to duty and to truth. We can live for the highest welfare of the world and for the noblest enrichment of our soul's life. About such devotion we may gather our aspirations, and if they do not define themselves in terms of devotion to that which shines through them, the thing needful is attained at least in part. Loving such things, we give ourselves to them and for them, and loving such things, we may eventually come to feel a sympathetic devotion to the Supreme which shines through them.

### IV

A second difficulty in our present day practice of our religious beliefs, has to do with the form and meaning of our inner contacts with the Intimate Presence. Said Jesus, "Ye ought always to pray." But how can we? How can we pray to the Cosmic Thinker, and what can we expect to accomplish by prayer? Here again is a difficulty involved in the practice of a modern religion. It cannot be surmounted without a radical change in the aim and method of prayer. The foundations of our religion must be intellectually in harmony with modern conceptions of the universe and on such foundations, how

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can the soul lift itself in prayer? Change in practice is not easy, particularly if the change threatens the practice itself.

It is with our religious faith that we confront the great mysteries that beset us on every hand and which at times sweep their shadows into our inner life. With all the courageous idealism which we can command, we try to pierce those shadows. Consequently, we are likely to suffer acute distress whenever it is borne in upon us that some of the elements which have entered into our religious faith require reinterpretation or perhaps complete renunciation. It seems sometimes as though in either case the faith itself might have to go.

This experience is no less hard for the liberal than for the conservative. Indeed, a good many liberals have had the experience when they were themselves conservative and found themselves becoming liberal. It seemed at first as though the most precious things were being lost. The experience threatened a heavy burden of change. Yet in most cases, I venture to think that when the change was made, it was felt that one's spirit had really moved into a larger room of faith and confidence. Nothing essential had been lost.

When the liberal finds that another change is necessary, it is again hard and distressing. He faces it with misgiving. Yet the liberal is likely

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to remember that change is not necessarily fatal, that change is the one constant element in life and in the nature of things, and that while the implications of change may again seem to involve loss, the loss must be accepted in the faith that more gain than loss will eventually be revealed. If another discovery of what is true has come, the truth must be accepted because it is the truth. So far, in human experience, the human race has not lost anything essential when following the truth. The loss has been the other way, with those who have seen but who have been "disobedient unto the Heavenly vision." That is something which the liberal tries to keep in mind.

Some such introduction to the subject of prayer is necessary even for liberals because many of the prayers of old, many of the prayers which have been familiar to liberals, can no longer be made. It is natural for liberals to be the first to realize the necessity for change. Liberals are naturally the first to respond to the modern outlook upon the universe and to try to get adjusted to the new heavens and the new earth. Such an adjustment for instance, has compelled a definite elimination of some types of prayer from the religious experience of a modern Theist. He feels, however, that he is in a position to save the habit of prayer. I put the matter in that way because I suspect that the

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habit has gone completely from the religious experience of a good many people both liberal and conservative. It may be casually revived in the formal utterance of public worship, or again in some great crisis when the habit of earlier years suddenly wells up out of forgotten depths in a human cry to the heart of God. But with many people the habit of prayer has gone. The reality of prayer has gone. Is such a loss necessary?

The Humanists have eliminated prayer. Even those among them who profess some shade of idealism in their philosophy, feel that the World-Spirit is so remote from human experience as to have no interest in it nor effect upon it. They who are mechanistic in their philosophy and conceive of the universe in terms of Impersonal Force, naturally see no further use for prayer. Consequently, the Humanists as a whole, consider that the universe is indifferent to humanity and they have, therefore, eliminated the habit of prayer. They have introduced, however, the habit of aspiration, an exercise which is spiritually and mentally, in other words psychologically, of immense value. The experience, however, is confined to the human end; there is nothing at the other end. The assumption seems to be that there is nothing to ratify or to confirm their aspirations in any Spiritual Reality. There is nothing to indicate any

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cosmic attention to the inner life of man.

In the aspirations of a modern Theist, on the other hand, there is a sense that there is something at the other end, and not a Somewhat but a Someone. That is because he has seen reason to believe that the intelligible universe is the manifestation of Intelligence, a Cosmic Intelligence, "far superior to his own" but still Intelligence, universally administering the intelligible, that is, universally immanent, sustaining and directing the intelligible universe, from the outermost suns to the innermost atoms of his brain cells; and further, that the Cosmic Intelligence is a Moral Intelligence, revealed as such in the moral and spiritual nature of our inner life and there, too, immanent, administering the spiritual laws of spiritual being, laws which indicate that there is a spiritual nature which is being administered according to ways which we call laws.

It does not matter how the sense of an Inward Presence has arisen in human experience. It has come naturally. Most people have it. They who do not have it may well cultivate it because it is justified and confirmed by the interpretations which the Theist sees reason to make of the all-encompassing and interpenetrating Reality. From these theistic fundamentals he will draw his inferences with regard to the significance of prayer.

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### V

A modern Theist has long since faced the difficulty of prayer in a universe of law and order and has realized that there is no longer any meaning in the prayer which would assume a possibility of any interference with that order. Magic has been eliminated from prayer. Prayer is no longer a means for putting a human pressure upon God to do what otherwise he would not be disposed to do. The modern mind can no longer tolerate the old type of prayer, not only because it has no meaning in the modern conception of the universe but also because it carries with it such childish conceptions of the moral character of God.

A modern Theist finds himself subject to laws of physical being, laws which he must obey and which indicate that there is a physical nature of things with which he must be in harmony. He finds himself subject also to laws of spiritual being, laws which likewise he must obey and with which he must be in harmony. In the broadest sense every need is a prayer, but for his physical needs the Theist does not say his prayers, he gets to work. He obeys the laws of his physical nature. In obedience he comes into harmony with that physical nature and its forces work for him and he with them. For his spiritual needs he also gets to work, doing the things

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that are indicated by the laws of spiritual being, establishing in his obedience such a harmony with the spiritual nature of things that his moral and spiritual nature expands, strengthens, becomes larger and nobler. For some of his spiritual needs, however, he does "say his prayers" as a direct way of establishing a harmony between his inner life and Spiritual Reality, and for achieving certain definite results.

To the modern Theist prayer is a mood of aspiration. In that conception of prayer he is at one with the Humanist. If ever his prayer appears to be anything else, it is because language is poor to express adequately the transcendent experience of prayer, of the up-reach and out-reach of the human spirit. Religion is an art. Prayer is an art. Only the loftiest symbols can begin to express the emotions, the thoughts, the needs of the prayerful mood, and hence the language of poetry may be freely used.

To the Humanist, I repeat, there is nothing but the human end; nothing at the other end. But to the Theist there is the cosmic end, the divine end. It appears to be a natural inference from what has been indicated concerning the immanency of the Cosmic Intelligence, the unthinkable nearness of the Cosmic Presence, administering the laws of our inner being so that we are actually enabled to think, and to aspire, and "to lift up our souls."

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From such a conception of the immanency of the Cosmic Moral Intelligence, it is impossible for me not to infer the awareness of that Intelligence concerning what goes on in my mind. Even if there is no voice announcing that awareness, the inference that it is there is a rational one, and as such it becomes a definite indication of a reality in prayer and of a reason for prayer. The inference is that there is Someone at the other end. Prayer, therefore, becomes not only an aspiration but a communion, a communion between the human intelligence and the Cosmic Intelligence. Humanly it becomes a mood of receptivity, and in that mood the inner results of prayer are accounted for. It is such inner and not outer results from prayer which a modern Theist emphasizes.

### VI

Dr. Savage once declared that if we had a plant which needed more light we would take it from its darkened room into the sunlight. Its prayer would be answered. We would not change the sun, but we would change the plant's relation to the sun. We would bring it into direct communication with the Source of Energy and it would be revived. In the sublime uplift of our inner life, we do not change the course of events in the universe or bring something to pass outwardly which otherwise would

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not happen. We come up from under the burdens and perplexities of the moment into direct communion with the Cosmic Presence. We ourselves revive. We are renewed in the right spirit. Something happens we know not how, but there is within us a readjustment. We feel stronger, we have a realization of greater resources, an increase of spiritual energy, a new courage and confidence, a peace of mind and a sense of mastery. These are the results. They are definite results. They cannot come from Nothing. They must somehow be accounted for. The prayer accounts for them even if it does not explain them. The prayer has been the cause. It has brought the human spirit into harmony with Cosmic Spirituality. The prayer has been the open channel, as it were, through which results have come. Nothing has been done in a magical way, but something has been accomplished in a natural way. We feel better and we are better. We have been in direct contact with Spiritual Energy and as a result we ourselves are spiritually energized and better able to do what needs to be done. It is a transcendent experience which we can only describe in mechanical terms. Like the plant, we have been in contact with the Source. We have experienced what we cannot explain.

Not all people have this inner experience in the manner in which I have described it. In-

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deed, they may have no such inner experience whatsoever. On the other hand, others may feel that the above description is a very attenuated appreciation of a vital fact and a desperate need. What I have said is very far indeed from being an exhaustive description of the act of prayer, but I am dwelling upon one thought and that is, if one feels that he is making contact with Spiritual Reality present to his inner being, he feels reenforced. I should say that the results were practically inevitable. There may be no direct consciousness of an infusion of power, but through the thought, "O, God," come feelings of renewal, of serenity and of security. I explain these feelings as results of the prayer-thought. One's spirit has made contact with the One. The sense of need or of weakness, of self-condemnation or of hopeless humiliation tends to pass. One seems no longer to be spiritually sick unto death: the soul tends to recovery.

Prayer is a well-nigh universal human experience and manifested on many levels of spiritual attainment. As Longfellow beautifully expressed it in the opening lines of "Hiawatha":

"That in even savage bosoms  
There are longings, strivings, yearnings  
For the good they comprehend not;  
And their feeble hands and helpless,  
Groping blindly in the darkness,  
Touch God's right hand in that darkness  
And are lifted up and strengthened."

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No matter how sophisticated we have become in our day, there are shadows of great mysteries which sweep over our inner life. They accompany spiritual crises involving the dearest and most precious things we know, crises before which the knowledge of the wise is vain. We need help! And then in our own souls' depths

“ . . . feeble hands and helpless,  
Groping blindly in the darkness.  
Touch God's right hand in that darkness  
And are lifted up and strengthened.”

That is Humanism plus. It is the theistic experience with something at the other end. It is the soul's realization that while it must seek contact by its own initiative, it is met at the other end of its prayer by One who cares.

### VII

All aspirations may bring about strengthening and comforting readjustments within one's inner life, but if there be Nothing at the other end, they are like a searchlight which hits a cloud. The end of the beam of light is in sight. It is stopped, shut in, broken off. Without the cloud, the beam of light is endlessly taken up by the all-encompassing Reality. With Nothingness at the other end of an aspiration, its end is likewise in sight. It lifts itself, only to

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be stopped, shut in, broken off. With Someone at the other end, however, it is endlessly taken up by the all-encompassing Reality. An immeasurable meaning is added to the aspiration. Through it, the human soul feels that it has made a direct contact with the great Soul. Through that contact the inner life feels an added reenforcement.

If one sees this reality to prayer, he sees the moulding and renewing influence of the prayer habit, the importance of public worship which encourages the moods of prayer, and the importance of any experience which can regularly lift one into such moods. Above all one realizes the importance of any spiritual exercise which will strengthen and fix the inclination of the inner life immediately to turn to the Source in any time of need.

The moulding influence of such exercises upon children is incalculable. Prayer is natural to the budding idealism of a child. It can be cultivated with a natural spontaneity which is well-nigh impossible to attain in later life if neglected in childhood. By it there is fixed in the child an instinctive inclination to feel in later life on friendly terms with the Universe. The child is equipped at once with the sense that there is One who cares. A profound assurance is built up through such a sense of intimate personal relationship to the Great Spirit. Mystery may

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sweep its shadows over one's life as the years go on, but that reassuring inner sense is not easily lost. Impress upon the child, then, the most lovable conception of the Great Spirit that you can imagine—you cannot overstate the Reality. Impress upon the child that it must be true and loving because that is the Great Spirit's law of our happiness. See to it that the child's thoughts are defined and expressed by some simple prayer. For example:

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I know that God my soul will keep.”

Such a prayer defines the mood and cultivates the inclination to turn the inner life toward the Great Spirit. It is poetry. It is aspiration. It is intimate and personal.

We have many spiritual resources. There are many things which enrich and strengthen our inner life, many things to bring about within us a spiritual cultivation, many things to afford us light and leading. For the most part, however, they are reflected rays. We need at times to put ourselves into the direct rays, to get into direct communication with the Cosmic Source, and prayer appears to be the natural way. In my notebook of sayings, I have one attributed to John Tyndall, one of the leading scientists of his century: “Often unreasonable, if not contemptible, prayer in its purer forms hints at

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disciplines which few of us can neglect without moral loss."

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Prayer is a mood of quietness and confidence. Within the walls of some of the castles of the old world, one sometimes finds deep wells. They supplied the garrison with water when enemies attacked the castle. A source of supply on the outside would have been at the mercy of the enemy, but with a supply on the inside, the garrison was safe. The outward things which give us satisfaction are liable to be at the mercy of many enemies, but over the wells of the waters of life within our souls, no enemy has power. From them we can at any time draw strength and peace.

Many a time I think of the great souls whose greatness is in their spiritual strength. I read the prayers of Theodore Parker. So many begin with the words, "O, Thou, Father and Mother of our souls!" The source of his inexhaustible spiritual energy is no mystery.

I recall stories about Father Taylor, famous preacher to the people in the Sailors' Bethel in Boston. I picture him in a poor home standing beside a coffin. A husband and father has died. A wife and six children are left. What can be said to comfort the weeping mother and children? The great-hearted preacher cannot at once find voice or words, but at last the words

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come: "O, God, we are a widow!" A prayer is made, a prayer which comforts, consoles, strengthens, a prayer which dissolves the black cloud of despair and brings hope and peace. The prayer indicates the source of Father Taylor's power to cheer and to help.

I picture Savonarola as he appears before the multitudes in the great square in Florence. He dare not speak until he has knelt in prayer. Then the courage of his passion knows no bounds.

We read that Jesus goes apart into a mountain or desert place to pray. He, too, needs the renewing of his spirit, and finds it in prayer.

Such results of prayer are not so much to be comprehended as to be experienced. Nature's ways are often beyond understanding, but not beyond the proof of experience. In prayer results are achieved. We cannot say many of the prayers of old, but prayer habits natural to us in our day may be quite as strengthening and creative. They "hint at disciplines which few of us can neglect without moral loss," disciplines which are rooted in the nature of life.

## VII

### A MODERN THEISM AND SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

#### I

**I**N ITS outlook upon human destiny, a modern theism has little in common with traditional theism. Historic Christianity proclaims the need of redemption; modern theism proclaims the need of education. If it ever refers to salvation, it is in terms of fullness of life. Whatever it proclaims theologically or practically, is based upon the implications of the moral and spiritual nature of man.

A modern theism finds many inspiring teachings in the four gospels. The young man came to Jesus and asked, "Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" It was a point blank question requiring a clear and sufficient answer. What did Jesus say? "Keep the commandments!" That there might be no misunderstanding he mentioned a number of the commandments indicating what he had in mind. They all referred to the moral life. If the young man would enter into eternal life, he must live rightly here and now. When we think of the

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various gospels of salvation proclaimed by various Christian churches, what Jesus did not say is very significant.

The word salvation is identified with the old thought that the world was lost and must be saved. In modern theism this thought has disappeared. There is no longer a belief that the world is lost, but rather that it is undeveloped and needs education and spiritual training. Here is an entirely different point of view and the word salvation does not fit into it. Modern theism represents another idea, and, therefore, uses another word. It has no interest in salvation as such. It urges upon the Christian church that it reinterpret its gospel of salvation in terms of fullness of life, and that the word salvation be dropped. The old meaning is gone completely out of it.

In traditional theism God is represented in terms of a Sovereign Ruler of the world, governing the world with human beings as His subjects, praising Him and obeying Him as a Heavenly King. God is thought of as "the Father Almighty," much as the subjects of the Czar thought of their sovereign ruler as "Little Father."

Christianity has assumed that the divine government has been defied and that the human race has put itself at enmity with God. Christianity has provided a way by which God might again

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be reconciled to the world. We now know that that way of "salvation" required centuries of speculative development. From the answer that Jesus gave to the young man, it is clear that he knew nothing about it.

Historic Christianity has declared in one way or another that because of the fall of man, the divine justice and the divine government must be vindicated. Christianity has purposed to accomplish this through its doctrine of the atonement. The good life was entirely secondary to a profession of faith in Christ as one's personal saviour. In traditional Christian evangelism, it has been declared that morality did not touch the question of salvation. It is clear that salvation was in the nature of a political status. It was governmental and legal. God's commandments were in the nature of legal statutes. One professes the saving faith and his salvation is accomplished once and for all.

We read in the Fourth Gospel, "I came that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." Modern theism interprets salvation in terms of the abundant life. The relation between the Great Spirit and the human spirit is a vital relation and not a political one. We should not think in terms of government. God is to be thought of not as the Sovereign Ruler over subjects but as the Infinite Life in which we live and move and have our being.

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A modern theism would thus indicate its radical, irreconcilable difference with traditional theism. It is the difference between what is legal and statutory and what is vital and living. The two theisms have no more in common than voting and paying taxes have in common with breathing fresh air and drinking water. They represent different classes of facts. They represent different ways of thinking about God and man, and about man's relation to God.

### II

Problems of human destiny are problems of life. Think, for instance, of a seed which in some wonderful way locks up within itself life forces. Suppose it could reason; suppose it could know the conditions necessary to its best life. Could you imagine the seed hunting out a government reservation and expecting to grow better on government land simply because it was government land, and trying thus to get right with the government? No, you would expect the seed to be more sensible, to know rather what temper of sunshine, what richness of soil, what amount of moisture could best supply nourishment for life and growth. Finding the spot affording such right conditions, it would plant itself there and grow. It would be safe because right with the best conditions of life. One would

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not, however, speak of it as being "saved." One would say that it is a healthy plant. For all living things, it is simply necessary that they be right with the God-established conditions of life, and then they live and grow. One may continue to speak of salvation if he chooses, but he means life.

Man is life, a physical life and a spiritual life. He must find and fulfill the conditions of life, conditions which are not matters of statute but of nature. The world in the past never recognized a nature of things. Consequently, the problem of life has been to find out the statutes of God and to obey them. The divine will was a law promulgated and a commandment insisted upon.

In this modern world, however, we recognize a nature of things. We have come to appreciate the distinction between principles of morals and rules of morality. The principles of morals are inherent in the spiritual constitution of our inner life. Whatsoever things are of honor and integrity, of faithfulness and frater-nalism, of duty and sacrifice are principles of morals. Rules of morality on the other hand are the man-made, moral codes of the world. Said Jesus, "Keep the commandments." The commandments to which he referred were not given to Moses on Mount Sinai. They were the codified results of experience. All the great religions

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have their moral codes. In ancient times they were all associated with supernatural sanctions and yet in many respects they all represented what man has instinctively realized by experience as vital to life. In some of their statutes they embodied principles of morals, discovered by social experience as essential to life, and must be obeyed. On the high places of them all they have much in common. But they have all been perverted more or less by a host of beliefs, customs and habits shaped up in ignorance and superstition and which have often assumed greater importance than the principles themselves. Jesus condemned many of these beliefs and customs of his own people which stood in the way of the abundant life. "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

It is taking the modern world a long time to find out that morals are principles of life and not mere social conventions. When we are right with the laws of nature and with the laws of our spiritual nature, we are right with God, and that is all we can be.

When our bodies are right with God, filled with the vital forces, we are in health. We do not speak of the healthy man as the "saved" man. We can if we choose, but it is not the natural first thought. Again, when one's mind has the

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truth, then intellectually, he is right with God. What can he have more than the truth? He can simply strive for more truth and to be saved from error, because every error threatens to some extent salvation or life. Spiritual salvation is character, and character is supreme. One may be in physical health, but he may be a brute. He may possess a trained, educated mind, but he may be a rascal. I remember a man who took his life, confessing failure. One who knew him said, "Years ago he was one of the most promising young men I ever knew, but he lacked moral stability." Can we not see him as a young man throwing away his possibilities, because he lacked moral stability? He was not "saved" because he did not cultivate fixed habits of rectitude and of self-control.

The same tragedy works itself out in the sensualist. His life narrows in one direction. He loses the power to think highly and to feel deeply. He becomes content on a low plane of life where according to the spiritual law of life sensualism defeats itself. The primitive emotions wear out if played upon exclusively.

Tragedy overtakes untrained moral natures who misinterpret the desire for freedom as a justification for license. Multitudes misunderstand freedom. Men and women cry out, "I will be free. I will live my life. I will fulfill my nature." They might say to the modern

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Theist, "If salvation is fullness of life, then that is the salvation I want." What they mean by fullness of life, is fullness of emotional expression, but that is not fullness of life. It is more likely to be sensualism and an exaggerated egoism. It is a fatal misunderstanding of freedom. There is no liberty which is not adjusted to the laws of liberty. There is no true freedom which does not accept and fulfill the responsibilities which stand in the way of unregulated freedom.

Life means responsibility and responsibilities come first. They come before any other claim of body or mind. To disregard the claims of duty is to become a slave to selfishness which can have but one end, a loss of life. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"—the headstrong and the impulsive, whose very wealth of emotional power, unrestrained and misdirected, may drive him into the bitterest mistakes.

If we lack character, we lack life. Character is the most important realm of our being, because if one lacks health, still if he has character, he can rise above such a limitation, become a great person, and perhaps do very important work in the world. Indeed, in the little circle in which we individually live, do we not know that some of the tenderest, most sympathetic and helpful work is done by people who are suffering? Speaking of a person who for years had been an invalid, suffering greatly at times, lim-

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ited and denied in many directions, one said of her, "She went through heavy trials, but came through calmly and sweetly." Think of what that tells of struggles with self, struggles with despair, and yet struggles that ended in many a victory.

What, then, is character? It is the acquired habit of the right life. If one has character he may not be brilliant intellectually, he may not know much about the world's philosophies and sciences, histories and literatures. He may in fact, be quite ignorant, but in his character he has the supreme thing. Character is the result of discipline. It is a growth, an attainment. The Salvation Army worker asks, "Are you saved?" That is, have you accepted Christ as your personal saviour? If so, then he would say, "You are saved." That is, you have fulfilled the conditions of salvation. A modern Theist would say, "No, you have only begun to be saved. You have taken the first step. Your life is inclined toward salvation, toward a better life." The traditionalist may reply, "If I am right in my belief, I am safe and you are not. If you are right I am still safe, so that my position is safer than yours." The modern Theist would still insist, "If I am right you are not safe unless your life is right. Then you will certainly be safe whatever your doctrinal professions. Your mind must be open to the truth and committed

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to the truth as you see it, and your spirit must be daily dedicated to life at its best. Of course, if you are right I am not safe, but I am not interested in safety on your terms."

### III

A modern Theist draws his inspirations from the realities of life and finds in those realities the supreme authorities for life. The old authority, the "thus-saith-the-Lord" authority, is weakening. It does not voice realities, yet multitudes know no other and many are drifting into a moral anarchy which means, for some, an irreparable damage. The old authority was better than none, yet it is meaning less and less. On the other hand, to get the idea that morals are nothing but conventions, nothing but local customs and social traditions, is to make a calamitous mistake. It is life itself which reveals the mistake.

Our outlook upon life must deal with reality. Our moral and spiritual being, whence came it? Not from a direct act of creation but from a process of growth. Back of us is an age-long process of development—back to the pre-human world, and back of that to the world-stuff. Human destiny is to be understood in terms of spiritual evolution.

The thing of chief importance to realize is

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that the moral and spiritual life of man is to be understood in terms of survival-value. Such terms mean that in the development of the inner life, natural selection has played some part, and not only in human life but in the pre-human life where the roots of morality are found, where certain habits of life have led to a natural selection of the life which had such habits. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard." Go also to the squirrel, go to the bees, go to animal parents and find habits of prudence and of thrift, habits of co-operation, habits of courage, of parental care and self-sacrifice for the young. All such habits and many others, have survival value. It has been a stern and grim selective process in spiritual evolution, and it is still going on.

In human life, whether largely unconscious in the early man or largely conscious in the later man, morality has meant survival value. If real morals have been perverted, nature has asserted itself, inflicted its penalties, and brought life back to the survival values, growth values, spiritual values, values of power, of enrichment, of truth and of co-operation. Humanity is made that way. When we realize that, we see that our moral authority is in our very being according to the laws of which we must live—must, because our very nature is involved, because the survival of personality is involved. We have even reached the point where we can see that

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civilization must build up a system of international morals, if it is to survive.

Consequently, the inspirations of religion to-day must minister to these survival values, according to our best judgments. Whatsoever things are honest and of good report, we must think on these things because they are survival values. Life survives in and with these values. It weakens, fades out, shrinks and shrivels without them.

### IV

Mankind appears to be finding its destiny in a process of spiritual evolution. If we bring in the word salvation here we would say that it is a progressive thing, not something obtained once and for all but something obtained by growing up to it; and growing up is a many sided process. It was once believed that you could be admitted to a heavenly place with a password, you could profess the saving faith and step in. But if you must grow up to a heavenly condition, it is your very being that must expand in understanding, in idealism, in strength of will, and by constant and endless effort.

A modern theism would interpret spiritual evolution as something vital, according to a nature of things which we cannot escape nor deceive nor trifle with, either as children or as adults. Our religion must inspire us to keep to

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our bravest and best, to carry on the cultivation of our inner life with a deepening knowledge and appreciation and a strengthening of our moral and spiritual control. Such a process of spiritual evolution is to a certain extent a process of self-direction. Under self-direction the inner life evolves toward ideal ends, but without direction the process reverses itself in the direction of the lower life. That is the awful alternative which confronts mankind individually and collectively. The lower life continues, persists, drives and struggles with fiendish ingenuity to recover lost ground, to satisfy the lower self, to contract personality to a zero point, which is the point of primitive appetite. The higher life feels the pull of ideals, of preferences for what is true, for what is better, for the inner approval of conscience, for the satisfaction, the peace and happiness of such approval. The spiritual capacities strive to express themselves in growth and development, in powers which resist the lower and attain the higher, to will the necessary efforts and sacrifices for the sake of the life of the spirit. Such are the capacities in which spiritual evolution takes place, in which individually and collectively we are to fulfill our true destiny.

We have had the way pointed out for us by the great seers of the human race. Said the man of Nazareth, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as

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thyself." At first thought the principle is not clear. Love of neighbor is to be as love of self. Self-love is thus the standard, yet it is self-love which always seems to confront us with selfishness, the very thing which belittles the inner life. On second thought, we find that we can turn the principle about so that it reads, "Thou shalt love thyself as thou shouldst love thy neighbor"—and how is that? In our neighbor we love what is lovable. If we do not know him well enough for that, we can feel a good will toward him as a human being, with his human possibilities and needs. We can reverence the divine nature in him. We can feel that we must treat him so as to bring out and to confirm that nature, bring out his good and bring on his well-being. Is not that the way in which we should love ourselves, love what is divine in us, bring out the good, bring on our best and bravest selfhood, fulfill our destiny in life's best things?

The way and the truth of life thus appears to be a two-fold path, a path of inward development, of self-mastery and self-cultivation, of growth in strength of self-direction, in appreciation and understanding; and an outward path of giving life to others, of going out of self to others, for their good. "Each man shall bear his own burden"—a way of self-cultivation. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ"—a giving of life to others. The

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two paths run along together, at times joining one another, at all times supplementing each other in the growth and culture of the spiritual life.

The two paths are not going away from Hell but away from the lower life, away from the trivial and the self-centered self toward the larger, more significant self, the self that is esteemed, revered and preferred, the self which is cultivated by renewing the inner life, by raising the levels of one's aims and purposes, satisfactions and aspirations. It is the self attained by following the urge of that native idealism within us, the urge to outgrow littleness and to attain the abundant life.

Think what it means to the race to grow out of ignorance into knowledge, into an understanding, for instance, of the laws of health. Think of the millions who have died, the millions who have dragged out weary lives in pain and suffering, from what are today easily preventable causes. Today we know so much more. Yet, today we still know so little! I remember a little boy who fell ill and whose father turned for help to a number of the wisest physicians. After a consultation one of them, a friend, laid his hand on the father's shoulder and said, "Old friend, we don't know what the trouble is." Burdens of ignorance, many and terrible, burdens of superstition, burdens of war, of pain, poverty

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and disease, industrial burdens, moral and religious burdens, all bring fears and hardships into life because in one way or another, the world does not know what the trouble is. Moreover, the pity of it is that the world's thoughts and energies are still not so much concentrated upon these burdens to throw them off as upon imaginary terrors in the world to come. What a pity, the wasted efforts of centuries, the wasted efforts of today, seeking to placate a divine wrath of which there is no evidence!

### V

In his soul and with his fellowmen, each man is privileged to make his own struggle for life, for growth, for salvation. A struggle it is, never ending. There is a terrible drive in modern life toward selfishness and self-centeredness, a selfish concentration upon the countless things which can give pleasure through the senses. On the other hand the world has never seen such a time when such sense appeals are counteracted by aspirations to do good in the world, to pay back into the social treasury something of the wealth which one has been fortunate enough to take out, to give some unpaid service for human welfare. Every day at luncheon meetings, afternoon meetings, evening meetings, in all our cities, there are thousands of the busiest, most

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business-absorbed men, giving time, giving thought to human relief and to the cultivation of the world's better life. The women may possibly go the men one better because they have innumerable morning meetings to the same ends. The nothing-but-a-business-man is today becoming a rare and pathetic spectacle. It is felt that there is no excuse for him unless he happens to be one who definitely sees the ideal side of his business, and sees to it that it fits in helpfully into the great world's service of business and devotes himself to its effectiveness and extension.

More and more in these days is it perceived that we cannot secure our own spiritual evolution apart from the world we live in. This is why the individualistic gospel of traditional Christianity is so obviously outgrown. No individual salvation is possible. No heaven could possibly be created out of individuals who would save themselves. We evolve spiritually as our lives are helpfully involved in the lives of others. I know a scrubwoman who is about as ignorant as it is possible to be in this twentieth century. Her mind is crowded with superstitions concerning signs and wonders, but her heart is right. Her life is a continuous service, hard but loving, "helpfully involved" in the lives of others. She is taking the two-fold path. Her mind needs a lot of saving, that is, of knowledge and of understanding, but her spiritual evolution is going

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on in a rich and beautiful inner development and outward service. It would be fair to say that all of our minds need a lot of saving, that is, much more knowledge and enrichment and yet we may be taking the two-fold path.

It may be said, moreover, that there is a terrible drive in modern life toward hardness and toward hard-boiledness. The hard-boiled man or woman displays an arrested development in the most important region of the spirit, the heart region, the sentiment region. Selfishness, power and cheap ideals tend to make us hard. Disappointments, particularly disappointments with people tend to make us hard. I know a man who was betrayed by a friend. He was so thoroughly robbed that it was necessary for him to start life over again, which he did successfully. By and by the betrayer himself lost his money, and found himself in a very unfortunate position, unfortunate not only for himself but for his family. Certain friends started a subscription paper for his relief. Unwittingly the paper was presented to the man who had been betrayed. He looked at it, thought for a moment, said, "That man once did me a grave injury, but I will sign it." One has to be a big man to say that, so big that he is not hard, so big that he can forgive, that is, so big that he will not poison his own inner life by thoughts of revenge or of hate.

A vital religion which keeps us to the two-

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fold path will keep us from becoming hard. Spiritual evolution stops at the point where we have become heartless.

A vital religion which is thus concerned primarily with the survival values of life proclaims nothing to fear except the triumph of the lower nature. There is nothing to fear except the penalties which are inevitably involved in such triumphs. Cause and effect! Something wrong is done, the results are there, whether perceived or not, and if such results accumulate, they lead to the supreme tragedy of complete failure. I have seen our boys and girls in our schools and colleges. I have seen those who have come out of well-to-do families. One would think that they had every advantage, but the great alternative is before them. They can succeed happily or they can fail lamentably. It all depends upon the direction of their inner lives. In spite of their apparent advantages, that direction may be downward, and if it is, they fail. "What disadvantages are you giving your son?" asked one rich father of another. The question indicated a realization that life itself is not deceived by what may appear to be advantages.

The survival values, the growth values, are vital consequences of good conduct, vital reactions within us of good thoughts and deeds. The real morals which the world is now trying to discover are the vital ways of living and of be-

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coming. The world is trying to free itself from outgrown conventions and to create conventions which will represent moral and spiritual realities.

### VI

It is of vast importance that we hold to the supreme valuation of the human spirit. We must not be misled by any of the contemporary philosophies which would minimize the transcendent significance of personality. By its very nature it has supreme significance. If it is immortal, it is immortal by nature. If it is divine, it is worth saving. Not for an instant should our estimate of the moral and spiritual significance of life be lessened by any impression which may be made upon us by comparing it with the material framework of the infinite universe. It cannot be said too often that there is nothing in the significance of mere size to compare with the significance of quality and of worth, of spiritual values won and kept. The cultivation of such quality is our human destiny. That destiny depends wholly on what is going on in our inner life, in the way we direct life, in the way we take life, the way we evaluate life.

If, then, we think of our soul's life and destiny in terms of spiritual evolution, we realize that the theory must be put into practice, into life, an endless privilege and an endless respon-

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sibility. If we fulfill the opportunity—results on that basis. If we fail the opportunity—results on *that* basis. Conduct and consequences! Habits and character! The inner life can drift downward or it can be directed upward. It will not drift upward. If we give care to its upward direction only during the time which may be left after all other conceivable things are cared for, no such time will ever be found. Only the profound realization that we must keep our souls on top, will move us to find time for it.

Spiritual evolution is a vision of unending growth. In modern times man's scientific advancement of the process is astounding. More and more he is a creative agent, a creative co-operator in his own development. The way for further growth is ever open, particularly in the powers of his mind. "There are endless possibilities in this direction," says Dr. Hrdlicka, and he adds, "a thoroughly general appreciation of all this will at once be a moral factor of great importance. It will be one of the main pillars of future religion."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, spiritual evolution visions an immortal process. We need not attempt to imagine the details beyond our earthly experience. We need but to hold fast to the reasonable faith, and then find the way to its realization in the life of the every day.

<sup>1</sup> *Outlook*, Sept. 18, 1929.

## VIII

### A MODERN THEISM AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

#### I

**B**Y ADDING a plus sign to the meaning of the universe, a modern theism is moved with greater confidence to add a plus sign to the meaning of life. What is life for? The answer has been the quest of the ages. It has been sought in history, in science, and in philosophy. In and through all the mysteries of it, however, something has seemed to testify to an exalted destiny.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God." Had he known of the modern theory of evolution, he could hardly have made a better statement of the religious interpretation of the theory. As an evolutionist he might have said, "the earnest expectation of the universe waiteth for the attainment in the human spirit of sonship with the Great Spirit."

It is significant that when people are very young or inexperienced, or when things have

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been going smoothly for them, it seems never to occur to them to ask about the meaning of life. They just live and enjoy themselves. If from that point of view we ask, what does it all mean, we have to answer—not much, if that be all. If that be all, we should be in the universe like household pets, playing around and being fed. But along come hardship and affliction. It is then that we ask, what is it all for? We suffer, we fall, we lose what is most dear to us. It is then that we ask, what can it mean? The implication is that if life is to have any worthwhile meaning, the fact must be disclosed at that very time. There must be some sense in what happens, there must be some reason, some worthwhileness in life with all its adversities and uncertainties, its frustrations and sorrows.

It is significant that we look for a meaning in life, not when things go well but when they go ill. It thus seems plain that the meaning of life must be found not alone in the character of the things which happen but even more in the way we take them, in what we ourselves become in them or in spite of them. We try to see that what we can become in and through life as it is, must mean something of worth not only to ourselves but to the universe.

### II

Religion has gone its own way, speculating its own thoughts, chiefly as to the meaning of life

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in the eyes of God. The old catechism declared that the chief end of man was "to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." The meaning of life was to be found in successfully pleasing the vanity of God with praise and adulation, and most formal services of worship still seem to be designed to carry out that idea.

There is a long history of the change of emphasis in religion from the next world to this world, from the flattery of God to a reverence for man. In coming to its own, science has gradually put a check upon the unrestrained speculations of theology. The startling thing, however, in the modern victories of science has been the threat to the very existence of the spirit itself. We remind ourselves again that the natural sciences have seemed to be on the point of depriving the soul of man of any significance whatsoever, either to itself or to the universe. "Dust to dust"—that might after all tell the whole human story.

To this sad conclusion a good many thoughtful people have been forced to come. They have seen no way of escape from the conclusion that science has put an end to all spiritual reality and has left humanity in a closed circle of physical causation. Many of these people have cherished a profound reverence for human life and a deep passion to serve it. Yet, what is life for? There has seemed to be no worthwhile

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answer at hand. The meaning of life has seemed to be short-circuited. Its light has gone out. Such people have played their part in the world with sublime courage, but they have felt a great lack in their heart of hearts. If life means nothing at all to a material universe, a sense of utter futility has added itself to the knowledge of final frustration. There has seemed to be something hollow about all earthly happiness, something hopeless about even the noblest activities. If only it might be indicated in some positive way that something worthwhile in life is worthwhile to the universe, it would add a profound significance to life and to aspiration.

The new science and the new philosophy seem to be coming into a position where such a positive indication can be made. The science of physics has seemed to demonstrate Reality to be a closed circle of universal physical causation with man in the circle, yet it is now this very science which is declaring that its field does not exhaust the whole of Reality, that the facts of the inner life may be as real and perhaps more significantly real than the events of Great Nature. We have had before us the testimony of some of these physicists who have said that the ultimate Reality is the thought of a Cosmic Thinker, that the mind of man has now found definite and demonstrable kinship with the universal mind. As Jeans expresses it, "We dis-

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cover that the universe shows evidence of a design or a controlling power that has something in common with our own individual minds. We are not so much strangers or intruders in the universe as we at first thought.”<sup>1</sup> Such conclusions are helpful because we can now think of the universe as not dead nor static but dynamic with creative thinking. We do not need to think of ourselves as aliens in a physical environment. We have a part to play in the creative processes and what we do is significant to that process. Consequently, the longing for a worthwhile meaning to life, a meaning not shut up to ourselves alone for a fleeting moment, seems definitely nearer a positive statement.

The point is, and it is of profound importance to any thoughtful mind, that in a creative and creating universe, its highest creation, man, and the highest creations of that man, must have a meaning. What man does, what he makes of himself and what he helps others to make of themselves, must be what the universe has intended. The fulfillment of that intention must be the most worthwhile thing he can do, worthwhile not only to himself but to the universe.

How do we know? The question is inevitable. Professor Harry Overstreet points out that the modern habit of mind is to ask for proofs. He himself looks to the science of psychology to fur-

<sup>1</sup> Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 159, Macmillan Co.

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nish proofs in answer to the question, "How do we know?"<sup>2</sup> He believes there will be proofs when psychology emerges from infancy to the state of an adult science. Man's mind is the supreme expression of the creative activity of the Cosmic Thinker. We know, however, almost nothing of the human mind, and the further study of it, he thinks, may give us a clue to a more definite kinship with the universal mind, a more definite indication that the thoughts of man have a definite meaning to the thoughts of God.

It may be so. Psychology seems on the road to great discoveries. If it is floundering about a good deal at present, it is because the science is young and because of the profound difficulties in its field of research, the human mind. It is important for us at the moment to realize, however, that we do not have to wait until psychology grows up before we can get some light on the question, "What is life for?" To make a start in arriving at the answer, we need to look first not at the universe but at ourselves. We can look into the inner life of man, which is the only area of creation which we know at first hand.

### III

When we refer to the meaning of life, we naturally have in mind moral and spiritual val-

<sup>2</sup> *Survey*, January, 1931, p. 408.

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ues, and so we turn from the marvels of the atom to the marvels of man's moral and spiritual nature. Inferences from the marvels of human nature are as legitimate as inferences from the marvels of Great Nature.

The most distinctly human characteristics are to see and to follow ideals, ideals of selfhood, ideals of ourselves in the world. Moreover, there are human capacities to sense the Unseen in the seen and to feel that the inner life is vitally related to the intentions of the universe. But in answer to the question, "What is life for?" we start with the significance of our own ideal-achieving capacity. A modern theism declares that life is for the cultivation of the ideal-achieving capacities of mind and heart. Someone has phrased it, "Life is an opportunity to attain worth." Life is for the development of personality, what we ought to do and to be, in the life that now is and right where we are. "The earnest expectation of the creation," for each individual personality, has awaited just such a revelation of a Son of God.

In a letter to a friend which Browning put in the introduction of his poem, "Sordello," he wrote, "The development of a soul, little else is worth study." Said Whitman, "Nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is." To the self, selfhood is the most sacred thing in all creation. It used to be a test of spiritual perfec-

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tion to express a willingness to be damned for the glory of God. Such a suggestion today would be repudiated at once. We would not be willing to be damned, that is, degraded for anyone's glory, not even God's glory. The suggestion today, however, is absurd.

A worthwhile meaning to life must be the fruit of its own idealism. We think of great personalities. Could we ask them what life means, what would they say? Could we ask our national founders and heroes, Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln; could we ask the martyrs of science, Galileo and Bruno; could we ask the leaders of religion, Paul and Savonarola, Servetus and Luther; could we ask even the heroes of antiquity, the Spartans at Thermopylæ, or Gideon's band of three hundred men, I am inclined to think that each would answer, "You see what life means for me. It is for this very thing which I have done, this very deed. My life means this." And we feel sure of it. With what they had and with what they were, they faced their duty of the hour and by fulfilling it, they fulfilled themselves. They found their meaning to life. To them life was for that very thing which they were called upon to be or to do. But was it not also for that very thing to the universe? Was not something done, something attained which was intended by the universe? To answer in the affirmative seems rea-

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sonable and necessary to me. We ask the supreme witness. In the Fourth Gospel we read of Jesus, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." To this end were they all born, not as predestined but as born to the opportunity to bear witness. In fulfilling the duty of the hour, each fulfilled the laws of his spiritual being. He fulfilled the nature with which he was endowed by the universe. Hence it is reasonable to infer that what was done was the earnest expectation of the creation in each individual case.

The instinct for the ideal, the impulse which surges up within us to do and to be the divinely right thing—it may not be put into definite language or thought but experience itself reveals it clearly. I recall an incident of the great flood in Dayton, Ohio, in the spring of 1913. The river had broken over its banks and with a current eighteen feet deep, was rushing through the city. People were trapped in their own homes. They hurried to the upper floors. Houses were overwhelmed and carried away. People could be rescued only in boats which were guided with great difficulty in the rush of waters. One report was this: "It was in the early hours of the morning that two youths in the uniform of the United States navy saved the lives of more than half a hundred persons and in the end gave up

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their own." Such heroism and sacrifice were common in Dayton. They involved no self-interested calculation! The divinely right thing was done.

How common are such heroism and sacrifice in all great crises! I have the picture in my mind, left there by reading the story of Captain Mark Casto, lashed to the wheel of his fishing schooner, sailing into a wild sea off Atlantic City to rescue sixty-nine people from the doomed Clyde steamer, Cherokee. Ten thousand people stand on the shore and cheer the rescuers as they sail out toward what seemed to be a certain death. Great heroism in order to save! Were the sea quiet, there would be no cheers, but with the elements in such tumult, heartfelt tributes are offered, tributes to the supremacy of the spirit over the elements.

People are confronted by a sudden crisis and the flame of heroism burns within them. Without fear and with the last ounce of strength, they battle with the elements, they battle with adverse circumstances, they battle with their own doubts and misgivings, in order to save others, though they themselves be lost in the attempt. What is life for? It is for just that supremacy of the spirit, then and there.

For just that—in what we so mistakenly call the uneventful lives of men and women. The

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spirit comes to the top even in the young. A child worker was badly injured in a street accident. He was taken to a hospital where both legs were amputated. When he returned to consciousness after the amputation, he saw his mother crying bitterly beside his bed and though in agony he looked up and said, "Never mind, mother. Don't cry, lots of kids get jobs sitting down." You see what was in his mind. He mistook completely the reason for his mother's tears. What was uppermost in his mind was what is uppermost in the minds of the poor, the job. He had been the wage earner of the family. His accident meant loss of income, and he thought that his mother was crying for that loss. He never thought that it was for his pain and for his crippled life. In his boy's heart, unselfishness cried out, "Don't cry. Lots of kids get jobs sitting down." He tried his best to comfort her.

Life is for that best, that daily thing, that common ordinary thing which is ours to be and to do as the day comes and goes. In that thing, the earnest expectation of the creation has waited for just that attainment of sonship with God. Luther declared in the face of the duty of his hour, "Here I stand; I can do no otherwise. God help me. Amen!" Let each of us say that in facing the duty of the hour.

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### IV

Where do we stand! The illustrations just used indicate that the meaning of life is not disclosed when we stand alone but when we stand in company with our fellowmen.

A modern Theist has come to see that the business of saving souls in the traditional sense was a poor business. It is contrary to any noble idealism associated either with God or man. Really to save souls is to get heaven into them. To get heaven into this world rather than to get into heaven in the next world, to bring heaven to pass in our human existence rather than to secure entrance into angelic hosts of the world beyond, is the real business of the church in our modern life. It is a difficult business, but it is a divine business. Jesus declared, "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." The heaven that we bring to pass in this world will inevitably be carried over into the world to come simply because that is the God-established nature of the spiritual life. Any heaven that we do not grow up to we shall not be a part of.

A modern theology seeks to be a systematic arrangement of spiritual truths which can be verified in human experience. Modern Theists seek to formulate the most reasonable faiths

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which can be visioned and created, and to hold up supreme ideals of life, to instill them as principles, to ingraft them as working faiths, and to infuse them as qualities of personality.

These faiths must work in the world, these ideals must be fulfilled in the social life. Said Jesus, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." The apostle declared, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Only after nineteen hundred years has the Christian religion in any large way, come into harmony with the teachings and example of its founder. We now see that a modern religion is a socialized religion. We now see that it is the business of the church to inculcate a social religion and to inspire a social conscience.

To an extraordinary degree and within a generation this change has developed. The old individualism of religion and of the religious life is doomed. It is impossible for the individual to attain the abundant life in isolation. All the sciences combine their testimony against any spiritual exclusiveness. Anthropology and ethnology connect the individual vitally with his group. Sociology and social psychology declare that even the contents of his mind and the inclinations of his spirit are largely determined by his group life. Individualism is as much out of date in sociology as special creation in biology. All that we are and all that we have are

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due to the fact that we live with and because of our fellowmen.

We realize today that we are all taken up into and permeated by a social mind and we contribute to and are influenced by a social conscience. Of course, these are not things in themselves. There is no mystical somewhat, above and independent of individual human beings which can be called a social mind or a social conscience. There is, however, a state of mind more or less common to all of us, to which we contribute and by which we are influenced. There are certain moral attitudes which most of us take and by which most of us are influenced, attitudes which we call the social mind and the social conscience, representing the way that the group as a whole tends to think and to feel and to react toward the problems and necessities of the social life.

More and more religion is compelling people to realize that thus they ought to think and to feel and to react. It is not the religion of formalism but the religion of man, in the spirit of God. Someone has said, "Anyone is religious to whom something is sacred." The business of the modern church should be to cultivate that passion for the holy in human beings, for the sacredness in human relations, for the sanctification for "their sakes." Much of the social mind and the social conscience of the present, limited

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as they seem to be at times, show that that sanctification is being achieved and that the passion for that which is sacred in human life is a passion for a better world.

The organized philanthropies now feel that they have behind them a certain dependable attitude of the public mind. All great calamities involving human suffering are met at once by an expression of a social conscience that insists upon adequate relief. The problem of unemployment has made a demand upon the social mind and the social conscience which not only promises more adequate preparation for such economic disasters but a large work of prevention. It is now realized that the public can do but little although whatever it can do will be a help. It is industry which must itself meet such situations and with its own socialized mind and under the compulsion of its own social conscience, minimize if it cannot wholly prevent these great disasters. Industry is frankly confronting the problem as a problem of industrial management. It feels both a moral and an economic compulsion to solve it.

The business of the modern church is to inspire and to strengthen the social mind and the social conscience. The more it can put its emphasis upon this larger conception of life the more adequate will be its religion to the needs of the modern world. It all means that the more

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religiously one lives, the large and richer will be the meaning of one's life. "For their sakes, I sanctify myself." Wherever such sanctification is possible in the ordinary days of familiar duties or in the extraordinary days of crisis and of sacrifice, the meaning of life is indicated and the creative intention of the universe made manifest. The size of the deed is immaterial, the outward circumstances of life are immaterial. Marcus Aurelius was a great person in spite of his wealth, Epictetus was a great person in spite of his poverty and slavery.

"I may not triumph in success,  
Despite my earnest labors.  
I may not grasp results that bless,  
The effort of my neighbors,  
But though that goal I never see,  
This thought shall always dwell with me —  
I will be worthy of it." <sup>3</sup>

Jesus said, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "The joy of thy Lord"—the poetry of a great truth: that faithfulness gives a worthwhile meaning to life, both to God and man. The winds may blow or the floods come, but the spirit is more than they.

What is life for? "Life is an opportunity to attain worth." It is for me the triumph of my

<sup>3</sup> Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

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spirit. It is for what I can bring forth of my best self where I happen to be. That is the earnest expectation of the creation for me; that is what God expects of me. I may not get far, but I must try to be worthy of the opportunity, and in the opportunity to attain worth.

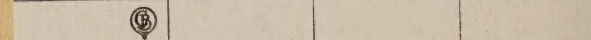
“I may not reach the heights I seek,  
My untried strength may fail me.  
Or halfway up the mountain peak,  
Fierce tempests may assail me.  
But though that place I never gain  
Here lies life's comfort for my pain —  
I will be worthy of it.”





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